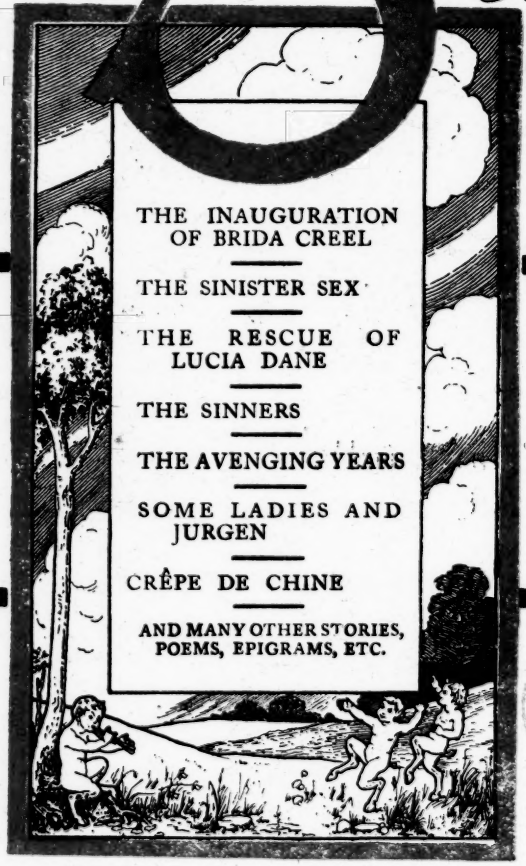
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct



THE INAUGURATION OF BRIDA CREEL

THE SINISTER SEX

THE RESCUE OF LUCIA DANE

THE SINNERS

THE AVENGING YEARS

SOME LADIES AND JURGEN

CRÊPE DE CHINE

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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By H. Dennis Bradley

These are the days of shortage—of man-power, of matches, of gin—but chiefly of brains, which according to the meat rationing are offal.

* * * * *

And since there is a shortage of brains there has, naturally, been little wool gathering. Hence the wool-shortage.

* * * * *

To be serious—which is usually to be dull and uninteresting—the market-price to-day of the best class woollen materials is stupendous in comparison to pre-war time.

* * * * *

Were it not for the fact that Pope & Bradley had anticipated the market and so enabled by their position to more or less control the retail prices of clothes, it is no exaggeration to say that the price of a lounge suit to-day might easily have been twenty guineas.

* * * * *

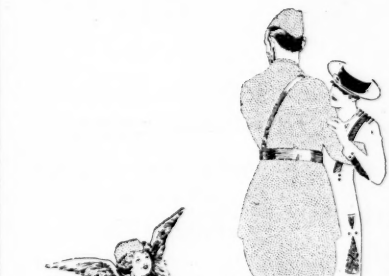
And if the war goes on for another year or two, since only an infinitesimal quantity of mufti material is being manufactured, this figure will eventually be reached.

* * * * *

We are cheerfully, if not drunkenly, paying about 400 per cent. more for our diluted whisky—which is a luxury, since we can easily exist uncheerfully on barley water.

* * * * *

Clothes are a necessity climatically and to modesty, and unlike the patriotic distillers, whilst apologising for their unwarlike spirit, the House of Pope & Bradley continue to avoid profiteering and to keep their charges within the borders of sanity.



"The Propeller"

"Rilette's" picture is still apropos of nothing —nothing of the present, for the present has nothing to offer. The future is the only hope for the world—hence the mind wanders.

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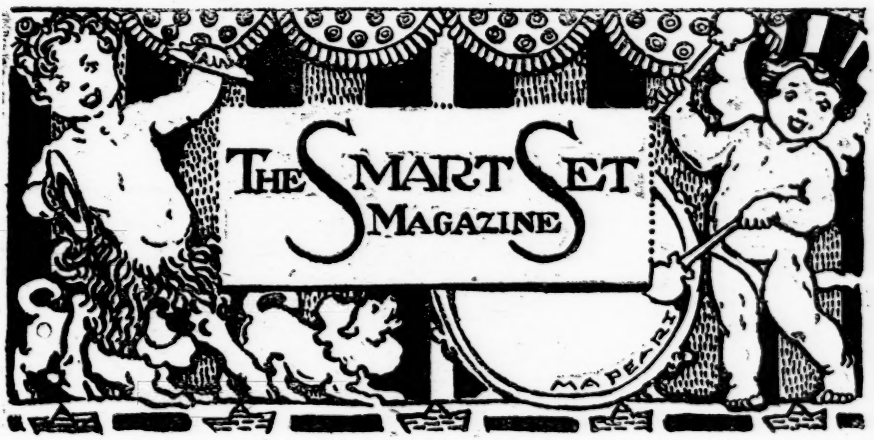

THE INAUGURATION OF BRIDA CREEL

By Lilith Benda

I

"NOR would it be smooth sailing for old Malone. You're too headstrong a creature for him, dear."

"To Larry Malone I'm a shrinking and exemplary young girl."

"You won't do it. You couldn't trick the poor old idiot so. You couldn't take his money and his name—"

"When it comes to a situation like this, I'd take everything but the initiative."

They were standing at the edge of a bay, speaking in hushed voices. It was that breathlessly still hour of night that just precedes the break of grey dawn. The figure of the man was lost among the shadows of great pine trees, and the girl, in a wet swimming suit, seemed no more than an impression of white lithe-ness swaying beneath the stars.

"You won't do it," he repeated.

"And why not? Because he's old and silly? Because he's your father-in-law? Because I'm a year younger than his daughter, than your wife? How about Father and Mother? They're all worn out, all dog-tired. When the house goes, am I to drag them to the city, and eke out a living there? It's got to be done. Let's not discuss it. . . . Moreover, once done, I mean to play square. But it's not done yet!" She laughed very softly. "To-morrow he's taking me to meet his mother. To-morrow I've an idea that troths will be pledged."

"To-morrow night I'll not meet you here."

"Oh, but you shall, Skipper!" She darted toward him, and slipped her arms about his neck. "And to-morrow you're not to frown so sanctimoniously when I kiss you. . . . I must go now."

"Brida!" As if unwillingly he caught her hand. "You who've lived all your life on this island, you who've been cloistered for nineteen years—what's given you your uncanny insight, what's made you the highstrung young witch that—"

"Do you remember," she interrupted, leaning her head on his shoulder, "when we went sailing six years ago, how you used to laugh, and say I had quite a future ahead of me? Well, for six years now I've been waiting here, learning things, thinking things over and figuring things out, and storing up conclusions, and making plans. Now I'm ready—ready for all I'd like to do, for all I'm going to do. I believe—" Abruptly she withdrew her hand, and darted out to the water-edge—"I believe I'd like to make a fortune, or have the world at my feet, or something. And I believe I shall. I'll be an actress, or a singer, or write high-flavoured memoirs, or—but that can all wait. Life's too much fun to waste much of it in accomplishing things."

She ran out into the water, little splashes mingling with the lilt of her laughter, until only her head could be seen, scarce distinguishable in the darkness. "Until to-morrow night!"

"I'll not be here."

"Oh, but you will, dear!" A white arm was flung into the air, as if in salute, and she was swimming with long, even strokes across the bay.

II

Mrs. Creel was frying pork chops. With indomitable loftiness of manner she manipulated the slices of meat, her vacant eyes gazing out over the sizzling pan into the harbour of Cohaqua Island, still sunset flushed, and a silvered violet in the mistiness of midsummer twilight. A shabby ferry boat was puffing its way between Point Creel and Point Noxon, the extreme ends of a sort of horseshoe of land formed about the little bay. And what with the sough of waves and wind, and the salt savour of the sea, what with fishing smacks at anchor, gulls swooping from opalescent clouds to silver-shot wave crest, and the tumbledown shacks of the fisherfolk dotting the shore, it was difficult to reconcile Cohaqua Island with a half-hour's sail across the bay, and an hour by rail to the city, more difficult still to bring it into any sort of compatibility with a twentieth century civilization.

For over the place there lingered an atmosphere wherein all the charm of the antique blent with all the quaintness of the obsolete. Mrs. Creel smiled faintly as she gazed through the open window. This was exactly the spot which a vigilant parent might choose for the training of offspring, secure against the onsets of worldliness, in the old-fashioned manner. Even a dapper yacht, moored among the sloops, seemed to shrink diffidently away, as if aware that it was an incongruity, only overshaded by the glaring, blatant incongruity of a great house built high on a hill overlooking the bay—a presumptuous house, an upstart, an impostor among houses, a house mock-Tudor in style, and flaunting without shame its parvenu opulence upon an old world tranquillity, the home of Lawrence Malone, pickle potentate, and but recently a resident on the island.

Cohaqua Island had its celebrities. On the doorsteps of their shacks the fisherfolk still discoursed upon the advent of Larry Malone, and the return of Keith Noxon, last of a long line of Noxons, to the ancestral manor house, centuries old, which tradition associated with a hidden treasure, and a family ghost, and a race of engaging daredevils who on adventure bound, sailed away from the steps, now cracked and moss-covered, of the old water gate.

For six years Cohaqua Island had seen nothing of Keith Noxon. A young man who graced only intermittently the home of his ancestors, and then to figure in nocturnal carouses at the island tavern, hazardous cross-country gallops, and sails through gales with a little dark-haired girl, who laughed at each onslaught of wind and wave, be side him—"wild Miss Brida," the fisherfolk called her to her mother's discomfiture—abruptly he had ceased his visits, and started, so rumour had it, his heritage dissipated, his creditors clamorous, upon a series of ill-fated adven-

tures projected to bring the world to his feet.

And rumour had it, too, that he had come to a sorry pass, what with high-flavoured peccadilloes of sentiment, and debts hemming him in on all sides. At any rate, it was generally conceded that he had crossed paths with old Larry Malone at the very crux of events.

Quondam stevedore, Lawrence Malone, by some whimsy of fate, had drifted into control of a vastly lucrative piccalilli and chow chow industry. A widower with only one child, it was his habit to pamper this daughter, to gratify her every whim. And Larry Malone's daughter had smiled upon Keith Noxon, with the result that his debts were paid, the manor house renovated, the mock-Tudor atrocity built on the hill, and after a six-year interim he returned with a bride to the home of his fathers, while old Larry Malone brought an octogenarian mother to play chatelaine over his new domain.

Cohaqua Island had its celebrities. Long before Larry Malone had arrived on its shores, long before Keith Noxon set out on his adventures and Brida stirred comment with her capriciousness and wayward beauty, there had been Augustin Creel. On Point Creel, directly opposite the manor house, stood a dwelling formidable in its air of haughty decrepitude like a reminder of the eternal futility of things flung in the face of upstart flamboyancy, on the one hand, and traditional grandeur on the other. It had a dog-tired look, yet withal a something regal in its ramshackledom. Smoke curled from its chimney, and melted disconsolately away without enough energy to rise to the clouds. And in the kitchen Mrs. Creel was standing over her pork chops.

At one time Augustin Creel had been the only illustrious personage on Cohaqua Island. "Gas conveyers—gas retorts." When they discussed the little inventor's successes the fisherfolk spoke in voices lowered in respect to the same degree that they became shrilly derisive at mention of his latest contrivance, "My gas for heating houses, generating electric light and power—a new gas, fuel gas, a new standard of gas. . . . Era-making, revolutionary, epochal! You'll see!" The little man expounded his invention to no matter how beef-witted a willing listener. For reckless extravagance and years of sloth had wrought havoc on Point Creel. The family treasures had been relegated to the auction rooms, the family servants dismissed. And Brida had begun with her "I will act," "I will write," "I will sing," "I will marry"—hazy, chaotic plans to recoup the family fortunes that had culminated, just when matters were at their shabbiest, with the courtship of Larry Malone.

Events of moment were hanging in the air at this close of a midsummer day. In the first place, an heir was expected shortly at Noxon Manor. Within a month, too, the mortgage on old Augustin Creel's house would be foreclosed. But outweighing all else in significance was the fact that Larry Malone had motored to Point Creel that afternoon and taken Brida to meet his mother—Brida Creel, who was just nineteen, a year younger than his daughter, Brida Creel upon whom the pickle king had been lavishing devotion ever since the day he had stood beside Keith Noxon, watching a storm from a boat-landing, and stirred to curiosity by a sudden gleam in his son-in-law's lazy eyes, had turned to behold a girl bringing her catboat to port in the teeth of an ugly gale that set loose the masses of her jet-black hair, a girl in a scarlet sweater, a girl with eyes of that vivid blue which lurks in flames, with a chin held very high, with lips that curled, and cheeks that crimsoned at the sting of the spray, and the whip of the wind.

A dull purple had crept to the pickle king's forehead at the sound of her full-throated "Ahoy!"

III

THE shabby ferry boat emitted a squeaky whistle as it came to port. Mrs. Creel removed her pork chops from fry-

ing pan to serving platter, placed them with an air of grave deliberation in the oven, and turned again to the window, the great, flabby folds of flesh that hung dejectedly about her, like an alien substance, quivering in grotesque fashion at her every step, and yet quite failing to obliterate an effect of dignity, of grandeur even, in the set of head and shoulders, in the tranquil gaze of dull eyes that lighted a little at sight of a stoop-shouldered man who was trotting jauntily up from the boat-landing.

A woman of some fifty years, she walked with a painful wabble that hinted at varicose veins. Her every breath was an asthmatic wheeze. And to the firm-set mouth there was a disconsolate twist, as if she were incessantly fighting a proneness to indulge in a martyr rôle which pride forbade. Hers was the face of a being with a birthright to the fag-end of things, a baffled, bruised face always with an expression of polite dismay upon it. It was a face that betrayed tendencies, thwarted but still in abeyance, to play lady bountiful to the Cohaqua colony, grace the star pew of the village church, be the rector's chief pillar, read Jane Austen by the hearthside, play Mendelssohn in duet form, work late into the night on her daughter's bridal finery, or her grandchildren's christening robes. Not an extraordinary face. A face, indeed, that became downcast at the mention of the word "extraordinary." Augustin Creel was an "extraordinary" man. And hardly had she accustomed herself to the vagaries of genius that upset her life, and divested her home of heirlooms and servants, than followed the vagaries of her "extraordinary" daughter.

For Brida Creel, at nineteen, exhibited few of the logical developments of a cloistered youth. To her beauty there was an intangible something, a something intense, extreme, that made for unmaidenliness. Uneasily the mother sensed attributes dangerous, and heady, and alien hovering about the girl. Uneasily she frowned upon a fluency of speech, a proclivity for puzzling terms which had often sent her to the dictionary, only to come away even more dismayed at what she discovered there. That look of polite dismay on Mrs. Creel's face had deepened gradually from the days when a little girl laughed at her commands, and went sailing with Keith Noxon in the ugliest of weather, to these days when Brida slipped into her swimming suit at dead of night and swam out over the bay, to return just before dawn.

Mrs. Creel gathered up some battered silverware and wobbled to the dining-room. Here, too, there emanated an effect of regal ramshackledom. The great chairs were carved in chaste design, but springs sagged, and upholstery was ragged. Damask portières seemed to deplore the ignominy of their frayed edges, even as contentedly they harmonized with the brilliant blues and golds that offset the shabbiness of the room just beyond. For in the library great sheaves of goldenrod and corn flowers filled a dozen cracked vases and chipped pitchers. Some light-hearted insurgent had evidently stacked the flowers about the room, the same insurgent, perhaps, who left open books scattered upon a couch, and pages of music strewn over the floor.

Mrs. Creel's wheeze became louder as she bent her back to restore the paper sheets to the music rack. But a soft look had crept into her eyes, and it deepened at the sound of shuffling footsteps on the porch.

A moment later Augustin Creel came through the doorway, his every step an attempt to inject devil-may-care jauntiness into a sort of hopeless shamble of his whole being. A small-boned little man with a cherubic face somewhat weak of chin, and sagging of muscle from which a pair of great, child-like blue eyes shone, he seemed always to be assuming a bravado air, and stood shifting from foot to foot, hemming and hawing apologetically. His wife laid a custodial hand on his shoulder.

"Well, Mother—" A nervous hem.

"How are things, Augustin?"

"Coming along, coming along,

Mother." The feeble body became tense. "Heating houses with my new gas. . . . Gigantic enterprise! You'll see."

A fly had settled on his forehead. It was at one with his gasconade that flinging his hand up into the air as if with one blow to extirpate a legion, he ended with a little, shy flick at the insect. And there was a suggestion of a whine in the faint "Era-making" that followed.

The custodial grip on his shoulder became a soothing pat. "Brida is having tea with Mr. Malone, and he is returning here for an informal family dinner."

"Ah!" He fixed his gaze upon his wife. And his eyes reflected the same fervid hope that gleamed from hers. "He could back my fuel gas—"

"And pay up the mortgage," she just breathed.

"Ah! Hem!" Twisting his fingers, shuffling his feet, he went on: "Of course our Brida must not pledge herself unless she genuinely wants to. Couldn't allow that. . . . And moreover, no necessity. A great fortune in my fuel gas!" Again the fly settled on his forehead. Again the preliminary flourish, the diffident flick, and a puny fury to his vociferation. "That winged pest ought to be exterminated—positively exterminated!

"Er-er-hem!" he went on after a moment. A smile lit the pudgy face as at the visualization of something ineffably precious. "Our Brida is—is extraordinary."

Mrs. Creel winced at the word. "Exceptional, rather—exceptional." All at once her mouth began to twitch, and the great folds of flesh spasmodically to quiver. An unwonted agitation battled with her stoicism. "Augustin, I'm worried! My baby—she's wandered away from me. . . . This isn't what I wanted. Years ago when she was a little girl, and went sailing with young Noxon, I used to dream. . . . And yet Mr. Malone is a good man. If only she would confide—but she's wandered away from me. . . . Augustin, this tearing around the island, this strange talk that I can't understand, this running out at midnight for a swim! It all terrifies me!"

"Hm! Ha!" The little man fidgeted uneasily. Perhaps, it's not altogether fitting that a young girl of nineteen should—"

"But he's a good man, Augustin."

"I don't want to think that she may be doing it for us."

"He'll make a good husband."

"If she really wants to, there's no reason—"

"And a good father. A good family man. Of course, if she doesn't care for him, I wouldn't have it for worlds." Vaguely troubled she looked about at the worn furniture, at the shabby walls. Her voice became a mumble. "He'll pay off the mortgage!"

"And he'll back the fuel gas!"

Shamefaced, unquiet, and yet both ecstatic in the great uprolling swell of a new hope, the two faced each other. Her hand still rested on his shoulder, and she looked at him with a certain stern sweetness as at a repentant child, shifting there from foot to foot before her. A deep violet shaft of light played over them, and so engrossed had they become with a halcyon vista that they started guiltily when footsteps sounded from the porch, and a clear, young voice with a peculiar bell-like timbre, rang out:

"Ahoy there!"

Almost on the instant, Brida Creel appeared in the doorway.

IV

She stood poised, tremulous, breathless on the threshold, her great blue eyes, like dancing cerulean flames, roving about the room, and fixing themselves, finally, in a look of steadfast candour upon her mother. A quality of auroral incompleteness emanated from her, as if she were not quite at the brink of things, but pushing aside every obstacle from her path, all eager for the plunge. And her magnificent self-assurance, the superb carriage of

the tall, slim figure, the effect of sovereignty over all pearly skinned, fine fleshed, long-limbed, fleet-footed creatures, all proclaimed a being born to the panache, and ateem with impatience for an intangible something that hovered tantalizingly near. Heady, buoyant, quicksilvery, her every feature betrayed a fervid zest for existence, a tremendous energy about to run riot. The little nostrils dilated, the big eyes roved restlessly, the lips, of a very vivid crimson, were curled in anticipation, the chin held high above a long white throat that pulsed with each rapid breath. She threw off her hat, and in the mirror blackness of her hair deep, burnished hues appeared to scintillate, like radiations of an inner glow and colourfulness.

"Settled!" With a dramatic flourish, she displayed a jewel, sparkling on her hand. "All settled! And the bridegroom-elect awaits felicitations in the hallway."

"My little girl!" A preliminary wheeze, and Mrs. Creel wobbled toward her to bestow the benedictory embrace. "Now life is beginning for you, and—"

"Yes, yes, I know," the girl broke in. In the face of her parents' uneasiness she displayed a very manifest relish for an amusing situation. One arm thrown about her mother's neck, the other resting on old Augustin's shoulder, she went on: "But I must tell you something funny. You know—or don't you?—how my pickle king grinds out his r's, how he roars 'R-r-rats!' all the time. Well, under the pressure of an emotional onrush, under the spell of my—my amorous allure—"

"Your what, Brida?" Mrs. Creel interrupted nervously, "Your am—"

"—orous allure. Don't look it up, darling. I just meant that under the pressure of an emotional onrush, his r's become w's. His famed piccalilli is pungent with spicing, but his wooing has a flat flavour. . . . Mildewed ardour! Erotomania in camphorballs! His r's become w's, you see. When I received the betrothal kiss, 'What a lovely fwock,' he murmured. And on the way home, at the first hug, 'It looks like wain, Bwida.' . . . Odd how such things affect a man. Odd that a remark about the weather should turn my thoughts to boudoir frocks, discreetly diaphanous, and befitting the consort of a pickle king."

"Brida!" By a supreme effort of will, Mrs. Creel covered the dismay on her face with an expression of genteel rapture, as Larry Malone, impatient at the delay, strode into the room. A gaunt, freckled, raw-boned man, with a long nose, and a fringe of sandy beard embellishing his receding chin, there was something about him which suggested an old and inoffensive bearded vulture. He smiled a diffident smile, fumbled at his necktie, blew his nose.

"My dear Lawrence!" With dowager dignity in her wobble, Mrs. Creel approached her prospective son-in-law. Old Augustin, meanwhile, was nodding his head, and shifting his feet, intent upon the renown he saw before him. Brida patted his puffy cheek. "It will be era-making, dear," she whispered. And then, her glance chancing to drift to the window, to the bay, to Point Noxon and the old manor-house, slowly her eyelids drooped, until just a little of the blue gleamed out—a blurred blue now, a tender, smouldering, sensuous blue. Rhythmically her head began to sway from side to side. The little nostrils dilated.

V

THE dinner progressed smoothly. Mrs. Creel looked about the table with pride, and dallied with her pork chop as if it were a morsel of grouse. Hopes for the lady bountiful rôle approached fulfilment—plum-coloured brocade, silverware for the buffet, a fifty-dollar corset. For when Larry Malone's eyes fell on disfigured wall-papers and frayed portières, it was with a glance that promised improvements on a vast scale. Manifestly he had a passion for improvements. In his droning voice he expatiated upon the improvements effected at Noxon Manor, the improve-

ments under way for all Cohaqua Island. His improvements were a favourite topic that lost interest for him only when his thoughts turned to the efforts of his daughter—"the colleen," he always called her—to bring Noxon around.

"Ranged around the world a whole lot, that fellow," he announced. "You know him, don't you, dear?"

Brida's face assumed an absentminded look. "I used to go sailing with him when I was a little girl. I used always to call him my skipper."

"Well, it's hard for a man like that to settle down. But now that the—the—well, you know, the little anchor is expected, I guess that'll bring him around all right."

Mrs. Creel's face beamed with a gloat for gossip. "I hear that the trained nurse has arrived. And that you've engaged a specialist from the city. . . . She's young and strong, she'll come through beautifully. And if she'd like me to, why I'd be only too delighted to be at her side through the ordeal."

Old Augustin was squirming at the turn the conversation had taken, "Brida if you've finished your coffee, sing that 'Samson and Delilah' thing for me."

The girl rose at once. In a moment from the farther end of the room there came a little wicked, elfin strain of music. She played it again and again until her father's face wrinkled in a perplexity that vanished when finally a rich soprano, powerful, untrained, and with the same bell-like quality her speaking voice possessed, broke into the popular cantabile. She sang it through hurriedly, finished with a discordant bang on the piano, paused to glance through an open window at the lights of Noxon Manor that shone through a heavy mist, and returned to the dining-room, humming the aria.

Her betrothed, immune to the wooing of melody, was conversing with her mother. "Nobody—" and he struck the table heavily with his clenched hand—"Nobody can play old Larry Malone for a sucker."

Brida stopped her humming. "How nice! How awfully nice it must be to feel that way." Her eyes were intent upon the sandy stubble at his chin. "I would like—do you know, I believe I'd like to write a play, and play in it myself, and make a fortune. Play a Delilah without malice or cruelty who cut her Samson's hair out of sheer curiosity, just to see if—if anyone could play him for a sucker after all."

A shade of uncertainty blent with the shy reverence on the pickle king's face, at her feverish laugh. He fumbled with his necktie, blew his nose. "I want you to meet the colleen soon, Brida. I want you two to be friends. She's a good girl. And why not? I gave her a good education. Convent, you know—Dominican Sisters. She paints on china fine, and you should see the altar-cloths she's embroidered."

"How nice! How awfully nice. . . . I can't sew."

"But she can write," Mrs. Creel broke in nervously. "And she could pick up sewing if she wanted to. You must see the prize compositions I've kept ever since she was twelve years old."

"Great! Great!" Benevolently he patted the girl's hand. "There's a tower room in my house with a fine view of the bay. I'll have it improved, all fixed up so you can write there to your heart's content."

"How nice! How awfully nice of you!"

A clock struck ten. Under the table-top, Brida's hands were folding and unfolding. Her eyes were lowered in apparent reverie, and yet the tranquil attitude failed quite to conceal an inner expectancy, a watching, a waiting, a furious impatience that intensified when her father, who had shambled unnoticed from the room, returned with a vast heap of plans and specifications in his arms, and a radiant hope in his eyes.

The hands of the clock moved relentlessly on while he explained his fuel gas. "A gigantic industry! Revolutionary! Epochal! Millions in it! All planned out, too, all tested, all ready

to have a company formed. I've figured it out even to the stationery—pearl grey, pebbled paper, with 'The Universal Gas Company' in old English type for a heading. . . . Era-making!"

His eyes moistened with delight at Malone's dubious "There may be something in this." And he rambled on and on, until the clock struck eleven, and half-past, while under the table cover Brida's fingers were tearing a handkerchief to shreds.

At last, out of breath and ecstatic, the little man gathered his papers together. "If you'll excuse me, I'll go upstairs, and figure out something new. Feel in the mood—in the mood. Afflatus, you know."

It was no more than a signal for Mrs. Creel to bring forth a treasure box she had placed conveniently near. "Little souvenirs of my girl's childhood."

Brida's eyelids drooped a trifle further. She was tearing the shreds of her handkerchief into little pieces, and letting them fall to the floor. But a collected air concealed her agitation, and she even ventured an occasional "How nice!" while her mother was displaying the treasures. Brida's school compositions, Brida's diploma, Brida's one Bible class prize, Brida's photographs at sixteen, at ten, at five, at two, Brida's first hair-ribbon, Brida's christening robe, Brida's baby-shoes, all folded carefully away in scented wrappings, all tied with faded ribbons. There was hardly a trace of dismay now on the woman's face. The asthmatic wheeze attained an almost joyous sibilance.

The clock struck twelve, and then the half-hour. Very gently Brida leaned her head against her mother's shoulder, but a tremor ran over her, and there was pleading in the laughter that interrupted a discourse upon kindergarten days. "Mother dear, isn't it getting late? This has been a strenuous day and poor Larry has to go to the city early in the morning."

Mrs. Creel retied a last bow, returned a last package to the treasure-box. Her head wagged roguishly. "I know, I know. Time for an old woman to disappear, and leave you two to say good-night. . . . I've old-fashioned notions, but don't believe in too much chaperonage once troths are pledged." And she arose laboriously, began to waddle from the room, always with a jocose wagging of her flabby chin.

"No, no, dear—not that!" The girl started after her, but stopped short before the benign smile on old Malone's face; stopped short, and started forward again, interrupting the adieux her mother was sending from the hall with a whispered "Now his r's will become w's, dear."

And yet there was no dismay in response. Mrs. Creel was in a halcyon glow. The chin still wagged. So that Brida at last, nonplussed, discomfited, turned back, and with the pickle king close at her heels, walked into the library.

VI

Mrs. Creel mounted the stairs ponderously, painfully. Her footsteps resounded in the upper hall, rattled the chandelier as she passed into the room overhead. There was a smothered thud, the protestant creak of a rocking chair, then quiet. . . . And between the affianced an embarrassed silence prevailed.

Brida, at length, turned to the piano, picking out with one finger little snatches of the impish air which had perplexed her father early in the evening, while in antiphony the wind wafted through the open window a faint, far-away strain of music—some humdrum song softened, mellowed by the distance into a barbaric croon, which the bolder spirits among the fishermen sent echoing from their tavern across the island. The girl's eyes widened in delight. Over the long throat her head swayed lazily to the measured beat of the music. "I like that. . . . Usually unspeakably obscene, the things they sing. But I like it—all indistinct in the distance . . . a jumble of syncopated asterisks. I like—"

"Needs improving." Larry Malone's husky voice drowned her whisper. "Improving. This place needs improving. The fishermen ain't a bad lot, but they need improving. That saloon's got to go. Lid's got to be shut down tight where my two gals live."

A spark of malice shot from her eyes, but only to enhance the witchery of this creature, all teeming youth, all tiptoe expectancy, all fevered anticipation, and impatience, and eagerness, all blithe surrender to a something which sent its clarion summons in the sounds of wind and sea—this alien creature who regarded her betrothed so inscrutably through lowered lashes.

A long silence followed while he stared at her, a little hurt, a little uncertain, as if with each instant he became more acutely aware of that crass uncouthness which seemed, before this girl, so malevolently to drench the very essence of the man. A purplish flush suffused his face. "Maybe"—his voice had a broken note—"maybe—well, it don't seem right somehow, your hitting it off with an old one like me. Maybe—"

"Oh, no, no!" She broke in, as if wrenched from a spell by the dreary prospect his abdication from the post of improver to the Creels implied. From overhead came the creak of a rocker, dulled into what sounded like a smothered, frantic beseechment. "I will try to make you a good wife," she finished lamely. But her eyes, fixed upon his for an instant, wavered back to where through the mists the lights of Noxon Manor gleamed. . . . A distant cry came from the fishermen's tavern, another vague echo of music.

"A big, rough fellow like me hitting it off with such a young thing. It don't seem right." Like ugly little smears the freckles stood out against the purplish red of his face. About his mouth the muscles were working. He shuffled toward her, took out his handkerchief, blew his nose. "I'll give you everything I have, of course. Everything in the world. My money, my life, everything in your little hands, but—oh, rats!—it don't seem right. You—"

She was looking at him now rather gently, rather understandingly. He appeared desperately to fumble for an appropriate word to bridge the chasm between them, bootlessly to pursue a poetic tribute, until by degrees a triumphant grin overspread his features. "You are standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet—oh, rats!" as she leaned a little away from him.

"You—" Suddenly his great hand shot out, passed roughly over her face as if in a frenzied effort to blot out all the beauty that enthralled him there, and lingered, the freckled fingers spreading themselves proprietarily over the fair flesh, tousling her hair. "With—" His voice was thick and guttural. "With weluctant feet where the bwook and wiver meet."

"Ah!" A spasmodic movement away, and she was arranging her hair, her face filled not so much with aversion as with a terrific eagerness to have done with a tiresome burlesque. The clock struck. She started. "Is that one or half past?"

He made no reply. His eyes, following hers, stared out at the ancestral home of the Noxons. One last light shining from an upper room was extinguished while they watched. "The colleen—she's asleep, and may the saints guard her." He smiled a twisted smile that put a touch of sombre, Celtic sadness on the dull face, which was like a stubborn heritage, strange, and lyric, and incongruous to the general composition of this stevedore who had become a pickle king. "My two gals! The colleen and you! I hope she'll be happy. I think she'll bring him around. If anyone—" A stern strength threw back the slouching shoulders. He raised a big fist high above his head. To the gesture there was a weird grandeur which transformed the man. "If anyone was to harm either one of my two gals, I'd—I'd—"

Before the alarm on Brida's face the

unuttered menace became a diffident laugh. "When the baby comes, that'll bring young Noxon around. That'll make him settle down. Can't realize that my colleen is going to have her own little one. Funny to think of her as a mother. Funny to think of anyone young, and—and pretty" . . . Appraisingly he scanned the fine young form before him. All unconsciously his face lighted, as if he were visualizing issue to make proud the heart even of a pickle king. A flood of colour to Brida's cheeks reflected itself in the deepening of the purple tints on his face. Mindful of amenities which forbade too protracted a visit, on this, the betrothal evening, he turned away, but, unfortunately, to fix his gaze upon an engraving on the wall which pictured a group of yougsters frolicking beneath the languishing smiles of a young matron. . . . A discomfited laugh, a wave of his awkward arm toward the picture. "They are wunning welay waces."

"Weally?" It came from Brida in an explosive half sob, half laugh. Immediately, to cover her confusion, to still any misgivings her raillery might induce, she slipped her hand into his, drew him a little toward her. And yet when clumsily he took her in his arms there was a rigid backing away of her whole body which left him panicstruck. "It don't seem right somehow. Brida, are you sure you want to take this step?"

The trouble on his face intensified at her abstracted nod, and meeting it, an alertness seemed to settle over her. Overhead, Mrs. Creel's footsteps resounded, each thud an unmistakable plea. The girl looked about the dingy room, which seemed to symbolize a dingy destiny, imminent, and to be warded off by no matter how ignoble an expedient. Through the window came the night wind, intriguing, enticing, and the aroma of the sea with its exhortation to have done with absurdities, and answer an insistent summons.

She rose from the piano, bringing to bear a histrionic aptitude to still doubts, to restore his dampened ardour, and speciously to palliate a precarious juncture. She smile an insipid smile, approached him with mincing footsteps. Playing a part, but playing it too well to arouse suspicion, she threw her arms about his neck, buried her face against his shoulder with just the proper dramatic flourish, just the proper note of uncontrollable abandon. . . . "Fwenzied finance!" The whisper was lost in his coat-sleeve.

"What's that you said, dear?"

"I said—" Slowly she raised her head, to meet the twisted smile so oddly at variance with the general complexion of the man. In a trice every vestige of dissemblement fell away from her. She smiled in response, a smile whose sweet mockery blandished, whose light compassion comforted. "I said that I'd play square, Larry Malone—in my way."

All silent reverence he released her.

"And thank you, Larry, for all you are doing for me—"

"Oh, wats!"

"And all you're doing for Father and Mother."

"Oh, r-r-rats! That's nothing."

Distinctly from overhead came the indignant snort of bedsprings at an inordinate burden, Mrs. Creel's discreet reminder that this colloquy must not be unduly prolonged. The pickle king adjusted his tie, blew his nose. "Getting late. Better be going. I'll see you to-morrow, my dear."

Brida followed him into the hall, in her eyes just the proper wistfulness, in her good-night kiss just the proper maidenly fervour. "Chilly night fer summer," he mumbled. "There's a high wind."

"And a choppy sea."

When the door closed upon him, she stretched her hands above her head, abask in a sense of deliverance. Then she sped up the stairs, tearing open her collar, unfastening her bodice, all exultant surrender to the impetus of her response to a clarion call.

VII

SHE had slipped the bodice from her shoulders before the top step was reached, and drew a comb from her hair as she sped past the room where Augustin Creel sat huddled over his drawings. Almost stealthily she tiptoed into the room her mother shared with her on such nights as the inventor gave himself up to lucubratory response to a divine afflatus. Silently, hurriedly, furtively she slipped out of frock and shoes. And her eyebrows twisted in anger when the regular wheeze from the bed became more hurried. In the dark the shapeless mound there stirred.

"Brida, dear."

"Yes, Mother?"

"Happy, dear?"

"Yes, Mother."

Mrs. Creel had remained awake to gratify a longing for filial confidences and incidental gossip. "Tell me, Brida: Mr. Malone's—er—Lawrence's mother, what is she like?"

The girl's quick laugh resounded. For all a breathless haste, she yielded to a passing sense of enjoyment. "My mother-in-law! Toothless, senile, a hag that would a lady be! Exhales both an atmosphere of shady antecedents, and her pride in them. Militantly respectable! Says 'ain't' with an air. Uneasily respectable! Looks as if she weren't quite sure whether or not to be insulted when the butler calls her 'madam.'"

"Brida!" The exclamation was uncertainly remonstrant, as if, while not grasping the gist of the description, Mrs. Creel had no doubts as to its being "extraordinary." Through the gloom she watched her daughter draw off her stockings, unfasten a petticoat, let down the masses of hair that fell, jet black against the nacreous skin, to her waist, to her knees.

"Brida, dear!" There was unwonted insistence in the wheeze. A bedside confidence had been anxiously awaited. The girl, stifling an impatient sigh, opened a drawer, took something from it, and tiptoed, barefoot, across the room. The mother's impassive face almost beamed. She was ready with the maternal counsellings:

"Brida, my baby, this is the beginning of great things for you. I've been lying here thinking of my own young days. Life is opening for you like a flower to the dawn—I mean you're the flower, and life's the dawn—this is—I mean the dawn of life, you know." She wheezed more heavily, a little confused with her similes. "All the serious, sacred things lie before you. Wifehood, motherhood! I've been thinking of my grandchildren, lying here, and—oh, Brida! Oh, no, no, Brida!"

Her voice became an agonized wail, for, all smiles and attention to the maternal platitudes, Brida had been slipping a swimming suit over her shoulders during her mother's discourse. "You're not going swimming? At this hour of the night? Why, it's almost morning!" A great tremor shook the big body. Two bare, fat, shaking arms were outstretched, the hands flapping ludicrously from the wrists. A hollow sob sounded.

"There, there, Mother! There, there!" Alarm on the girl's face blent with the alertness she had shown a little while ago, the terrible impatience, the necessity of playing a part. Her voice became soft, and low, and lulling. "Dear, it's my betrothal night, and I want to be alone for just a little while with the sea. Life is opening like a flower to the dawn, you know—"

"Brida," the mother interrupted, "my baby, is there anything wrong? Is there—is there someone else? Where are you going? Where do you swim to? Is there anything you want to tell me—or don't want to tell me? Anythink I should know? Anything a mother should know?" The big face stared up, very frightened, and white, and blank. "I'd—I'd understand."

The words came as if wrenched from her, as if, dazed and bruised by the onslaughts of an "extraordinary" something she had striven bootlessly to fathom, she were making one last piti-

ful attempt to bridge an ever-widening gap.

"I'd understand." As Brida moved away, the mother sat up in terrible agitation, a ridiculous figure in her cotton nightdress, with a little tight braid of hair bobbing at her neck. "I'd understand."

Dimly she seemed to sense a bitter farce. All at once the whole fat, swollen, tired body began to shake, each flabby fold of flesh to quiver grotesquely. With a fierce gesture she caught the girl to her, clutched her greedily, drew her close, patting the flushed cheek, stroking the bare shoulder. "You've drifted away from me—my baby has drifted away! Everything's gone wrong. This isn't what I wanted! I should have made time so we could play duets together, and embroider, and confide—always kept up a beautiful relation. I shouldn't have let you read all those mad books! You've drifted away. . . . It's a terrible thing to find your baby gone from you, something holding her from you. Not a curtain—you could tear that away! Not a door—you could break that down. . . . An iron-barred gate, it's like an iron-barred gate that you can see through—there's the horrible part, you can see that something's wrong, but you can't understand what. . . . And my baby—my baby won't even come close enough to—to shake hands through the bars!"

Brida threw her arms about her mother. The tears that had sprung to her eyes became a bond when they moistened a fat, faded cheek. . . . But through the window came the sound of the sea, always calling, always urging. And the night wind wafted an aromatic, caressful invitation. Her cheek, laid against her mother's, flushed, became feverishly hot. Her heart, laid against her mother's, began to beat more quickly, more loudly, until each violent throb was audible. . . .

All at once Mrs. Creel's agitated wheezes subsided. All at once the quivering ceased. All at once she released the girl from her embrace. She appeared to be listening, hazily reminiscent, to those heartbeats, and to the surge of the sea. She passed her hand across her face as if she still felt the cheek that had burned there a moment before, at the caress of a perfumed breeze. . . . All at once her composure returned, and she smiled in response to the smile of the girl who, although her eyes were still tear-laden, regarded her with a very tender mockery, and a compassion that comforted, like a handclasp through iron bars. "I'm playing square, Mother—in my way."

Stately, serene, Mrs. Creel raised her big hands to fasten a hook of the swimming suit which Brida had overlooked. "Run along, darling. I wouldn't understand."

Without another word the girl darted from the room. And all was quiet, save for a faint thud when the mother's head fell back on the pillow, a smothered creak of the bedsprings, and a tranquil, regular wheezing.

VIII

THE portico of the Malone mansion burst into radiance to proclaim the return of the master to his domain, while far in the distance a beacon light winked its signal of danger feebly through the fog, like a crabbed mentor befuddled by a certain verdancy, a certain summoning to high combat that charged the air, and stammering an incoherent and witless warning. Heavy, low-hanging mists drifted incessantly, obscuring the sky, save when at intervals a venturesome star sent its roguish twinkles through the gloom. And with the vague croon of wind and wave, and the distant toll of a bell-buoy, there came a last echo of revelry from the fishermen's tavern. A high, sharp cry rang out. A snatch of song pierced the night with a rhythmic, throbbing aliveness, and seemed, as it melted away, to resolve itself into the faint laughter that resounded, when the figure of a girl appeared for an instant, only to merge with the mists, and plunge into the sea.

In and out among the moored fishing

smacks, Brida Creel was swimming, her body no more than a lithe immateriality, a luminous shaft in the greyness of things. At each rapid stroke an eager young arm was flung high into the air, as if half in salutation to what awaited her in the pine copse at Point Noxon, half as a challenge to the beacon that flickered from the distance its squeamish warning. And as she came closer and closer to her destination, as first the jut of land became distinguishable in the murkiness, then a white bridge over the lily-pool, then the great pine trunks, and the straggling lacery of upper branches, she cut her way through the water with a sort of furious joy, as if superbly confident in pitting a high heart, a glad abandon against all puny, petty convictions so oddly concentred now in the foolish winking of a beacon light through the fog.

At last she drew herself up on the moss-covered steps of the old watergate. The wind whipped her swimming suit even more closely about the tall, slim form. She paused to wring the water from her great mass of hair, and all expectancy, peered into the darkness. In the poise of the uplifted head, in the proud set of the shoulders lay a quality strangely virginal, and yet queenly and dauntless. Of a sudden she espied a figure coming toward her from the depths of the pine grove. There was a sharp intake of breath, a quiver, a great upward surge of the whole body. Then "Ahoy, skipper," rang her soft cry. "I knew you'd be here, and I knew you'd wait! I couldn't get away before."

One white arm shot high into the air, as if she were flinging a gauntlet full into the faces of the high gods, and in an instant she was beside him, her eyes blinking with delight, a moist, flushed cheek laid against his, while the long hair, full of a briny fragrance, fell over his shoulders, entangled itself in his fingers, and she uplifted lips curled for laughter, and fresh from the salt sting of the sea. . . . An air of world-weary indolence fell away from the man when he took her in his arms. His heavy-lidded grey eyes lost their chill. Faint lines about mouth and temples, lines of lazy aloofness and derisive unconcern, disappeared into the smile of one too intrinsically attune with the zest irradiate before him to check a ready response. And when he bent his head over the parted lips, straight through the mists a tiny, laughing star twinkled, for an instant, its commendation.

IX

They made their way then to the heart of the copse. Brida flung herself upon a carpet of silky pine needles, drawing him beside her. An admixture of fragrance from sea and pines, and box hedges, and water lilies, made for an atmosphere that lulled and wooed. Immeasurably distant came the toll of the bell-buoy, while a constant murmuring among the branches blent with hushed whispers and broken laughter.

In the quicksilvery breathlessness of the girl's words and gestures there emanated a keen relish for this, an episodic situation, which reflected itself in the attitude of the man beside her—a dark, patrician featured man of some thirty years, tall, rangy, lazy-looking, a man of race and pride of race, manifestly a sportsman and flaneur, manifestly an adept in the art of the onlooker and do-nothing. Impalpably the fine features revealed an inaptitude to cope with existence, a fastidious shrinking away from combat, a streak of alloy so slight as scarce to debase the finer metal. His face displayed at once the man who had made an expedient of Larry Malone's colleen to extricate himself from an awkward predicament, the man who sooner or later would be "brought around" to an exemplary post at the home hearth, and the man who had caused a girl's cheeks to burn, and heart to pound when the night wind summoned her to him.

For no world-weary air nor sceptical smile could conceal his restless hankering for that elusive loveliness of things which seemed incarnate in the loveli-

ness before him. Between these two there was nothing of the frenzied transport, nor maudlin interchangement of vows, but an infinite gusto, and light-hearted ardour. It was only when his eyes chanced upon the beacon light winking so stubbornly through the gloom that he frowned. It was only when he took her hand, and saw the jewel glimmering there, that his lips twisted into a disagreeable smile.

"Oho, skipper!" The words came with a purling insouciance. "I'm to be your stepmother-in-law! All settled to-day! Isn't that funny?" But there was no smile in response, and Keith Noxon turned away from her.

The girl's lips drooped, but only for a moment, when, looking through the low-hanging branches, out over the sea, her head began to sway from side to side. "I like majesty. . . . The sounds of the sea, or an old master's sonata—majesty there! But do you know, there's a very terrible majesty in commonplace things, too? The sound of the sea, an old master's sonata, Larry Malone's big, freckled fist, my mother's wheeze, my mother's wobble—"

Shyly she outstretched her hand, but the man remained with averted face. A spark of resentment shone in her eyes when again she looked out across the bay. In an upper room of the Creel house a light went out. "Father is going to bed. Nice of him to let us alone. I can hear him chuckling 'Era-making! Epocha!' to himself just to drown a certainty that he's at his lag-end, and get up spunk to flinch pluckily through another day. Nice of him to let us be. . . .

"A very terrible majesty," she went on. "They exact obligation, inspire respect—Mother's wheeze and Larry's fist. Quite ordinary folk, and yet one hates to hurt them. And the strange part is that the more one hurts them the more they will have of that which exacts obligations and compels respect. I'm playing square, according to my way, and yet—" Her teeth dug into her lower lip. Perplexity wrinkled the smooth brow. She seemed struggling to arrive at a conclusion which only just evaded her, to seize upon a tenet hovering tantalizingly near. "A very terrible majesty, and yet—"

Of a sudden she had slipped into his arms, so abrim with invitation, the flushed, sweet face and parted lips that his sullenness fell away, and he caught her to him, proud to claim title to this ardour so freely proffered. Her mouth barely grazed his, and she sank her head a little until the lowered eyelids rested in turn against his lips. Then quickly she sat bolt upright, her eyes still closed, opened them very slowly, closed them, opened them, blinked in a happy wonderment that trailed off into laughter, into a ringing, jubilant cry. "And yet I refuse to go to my pickle king—unless you—unless you—!"

He released her so suddenly, so brusquely, not in anger, but as if prey to an overpowering fear, that she tumbled into a little heap beside him. "Can't you see"—the faintest hint of unsteadiness in the even utterance bespoke an inner torment—"can't you see that you'd better go now? That I really mean to have this end? That this is unquestionably the last meeting? You're lovely, dear, but there's a rank taste to all this. All very well to smash ikons, but there are things at which even a reprobate balks. . . . Can't you realize that she's lying not very far from here, probably awake and thinking of the great event that is to bring me around? That after all the old Irishman got me out of a devilish mess, and he's getting you and your people out of—"

"This is no joust with moral issues!" All angry impatience, she broke in. "I have to marry him, of course. It's got to be done. If the shanty were to be lost, if that—it's got to be done. Well and good. . . . And on your part, Larry Malone has paid your debts. Well and good! Renovated your house, given you an income. There's an heir apparent, an heir imminent, rather—"

"The heir, Brida"—his long, strong fingers intertwisted until the joints cracked—"the heir is so abominably im-

minent just now." And in the hang of his head, in the droop of his shoulders, at the futile tug at his collar as if it were a halter that bound him against his will, lay so spiritless and suppliant a self-abasement that the girl caught her breath in quick compassion, leaned toward him, only to draw away again, intent upon the attainment of an ultimate aim.

"Quite a jaded old story, mine, isn't it?" she murmured at length. "Father an inventor, mother with a life of sorrow behind her, larder bare, mortgage on the homestead, sweet young thing to act the beggar-maid, and old King Cophetua to the rescue—to the wescue. . . With the usual Prince Charming in the background, of course. Silly old story, but with a new twist."

Scarce had the words left her lips than she had moved with that startling suddenness which betokened a yield to the sweep of an inner elation, and was close beside him, her eyes sparkling into his. "Now have a care, Keith Noxon! For now I am going to play the siren. Now I am going to entice and ensnare you. Now I am going to Delilah you for all I am worth!"

She drew herself up to her knees, and in her eyes, and smiles, and eager little nods, lay a witchery artless enough to soothe away all scruples. Little, limpid, broken strains of laughter escaped her, soft as the notes of a wood-pigeon's wooing. And gradually all trace of dejection disappeared from the man's attitude. His face lit in response to the ebullience exhaled.

"Do you know, Brida"—almost timorously he let his fingers run through the long hair that was drying now, and curling into soft tendrils at the temples and nape of the neck—"It's hackneyed homage, but I raise the bumper to the mystery of you! There's something about you which reduces me to blankness. I find nothing to quicken the senses in grey-green abstrusenesses. . . . No mystery in mugginess, but the crystalline inspires a sense of awe."

"And do you know," came her whisper as she nestled closer, "that what I like best about this episode is that it has the grandeur of enduring things? Love like ours will never die! I am all ateem with maidenly this-will-last-foreverness. . . . For I believe that all my life I shall love best men who are a little like you. Lazy, bored, charming men, men who are a trifle sad, men with nice, heavy-lidded, chilly eyes, men with ugly little lines about their mouths which I can make disappear, men—why, what's the matter?"

For he had winced, and recoiled guiltily at nothing more than a feeble light which was sent flickering from the Creel house. At his discomfiture the girl frowned. Her hand trembled ever so slightly. "It's only Mother. She's lit a candle to keep down the gas bill, and is sitting up waiting for me. . . . Why can't they leave us alone? Why can't they let us be? The home-lights guarding me from harm! The beacon warning of danger! Why can't they let us be?"

His eyes followed hers into the gloom which enfolded them, which seemed to curtain them off from existence. A sinister sorcery lurked in this greyness, lighter now, but thicker, slatier, a dismal herald of the break of day binding earth and sea and sky in a strange intimacy charged with a strange significance. There was a suspension of all sound, the very murmuring in the pine branches but part of an impenetrable silence. Incessantly, stealthily the mists swam about, dipping, rising, gliding, slinking, tottering, scurrying, assuming vast, grotesque shapes, until it seemed as if an assemblage of spirit folk were skipping about on all sides, as if the high gods themselves had heard the intrepid defiance of a girl's melodious laugh, stirred their creaking joints, laid aside their statute books and descended to view without malice a woodland caprice, as if they held their breaths now, sympathetic, powerless to aid, abashed before the spectacle, inquisitive as to the outcome.

Brida's head lifted in ready zeal for combat. Through a short silence she

appeared to be summoning every asset to bear upon the onsets of an insidious opponent, and then came the bell-like lilt of her voice. "They've been good to us, the Malones. They've got us both out of the nastiest kind of a mess, and in return we—we two, Keith, you and I, two such altogether nice persons as you and I—we're going"—she laid a finger against his lips to stifle any protest—"we are going to bite the hand that feeds us!" The faintest, gurgling laugh, and she was rumpling his hair, twisting it into little curls at his forehead. "We're going to hoodwink the Malones, bleed the Malones dry, blot the proud pickle from the family 'scutcheon. . . . We're—we're going to play the Malones for 'suckers,' skipper! Just because"—she twined her arms about him, and lifted her lips for little nonsensical, thistledowny kisses on his forehead, on his temples, on his chin—"just because this is carnival time, dear! The world's at heyday, and I can't be bothered with rectitude and renunciation, and such stuff. Everything is in a breathless rush. There isn't time to ponder on right and wrong. . . Carnival time, skipper!"

Now her lips barely grazed his, and again she sank her head until the lowered eyelids rested in turn against his lips. Again she sat up quickly, opened her eyes, closed them, opened them, blinked in a delight that merged into the very softest of laughs, the very softest of whispers. "Carnival time!"

"Brida!" His voice was thick and shrill. "Try to understand, Brida. All the time you're talking, I can't help seeing that poor little thing with the terrible hope in her eyes. Remember, she got me out of a nasty mess. Saved me from disgrace. I've got to leave you now. You understand, dear, don't you?"

But the girl's lips only curled. "Carnival time!" she whispered.

"And the old man," he went on, always with that strange, choking utterance. "Old Malone! You and my—you and his daughter are all he lives for. . . . It would only mean another rotten mess. And he's been so altogether decent, so—"

"Carnival time!" the girl broke in.

His eyes shifted furtively to the park so obviously "improved," to the bridge over the lily pool with its "improving" coat of paint, to the house, its "improved" outlines just discernible now, where a silly little soul was lying, perhaps awake, and hatching silly little plans to "bring him around"—shifted back to eyes that met his with glad serenity, to a head swaying rhythmically over a throat that pulsed with each rapid breath. The wind tossed a lock of hair, all aromatic of the sea, across his face. His fingers intertwisted. Again the joints cracked. . . . All at once his hand shot out, just as had Larry Malone's an hour or two before, and covered her face, as if to obliterate the supreme assurance, the allure that enchanted there—and lingered, just as Larry Malone's hand had lingered, twining the little ringlets of hair in his long, strong fingers. . . .

He sprang to his feet, but on the instant she, too, had arisen, and swayed toward him, until at last he swept her into his arms so roughly that a gasp escaped her. She hung there, inert, her head thrown back, the long hair dragging in the pine needles, and in her eyes a blue blaze of triumph. A blue blaze that gradually deepened to a tenderer tint, that became the veriest smoulder . . . until all at once her face went blank with fright and astonishment when abruptly he released her. With a shaking hand he was pointing to a light that had appeared in the tower-room of the Malone house.

Her laughter had a strained note. "Why the terror, Keith? It's only Larry Malone. He's not asleep. He's up there prowling, and dreaming, and planning. Up there in the tower-room that is to be fixed up for me to write in. I can hear him on the day he'll lead me there. . . . 'Thanks? Wats! Isn't it westful? Do you like the wocker? Thanks? Wats!' . . . Oh, why can't they all leave us alone?"

For the first time something like a

sob sounded, betokening not so much a dread of impending defeat as a slight discomposure of the serenity wherewith she pursued an elusive tenet, and fought for the attainment of her aim. But immediately there followed, in the self-confident tilt of her head a deft retrieval. Looking out over the bay, in the dip and rise of the mists, she appeared to sense an effect of immaterial beings looking on, of giant heads wagging in disappointment.

"Sometimes," she mused, "I think of a deity who started in to be a god of joy, a god of fauns and dryads, an artistic god who wanted only the respect of high-held heads, and got genuflections, and lilies, and doves, and lambs, and crosses, and crowns of thorns until he sickened of his job, and became just a routine man with no eye for ensemble effects—"

"And no genius for details."

She turned, her surprise at his equable tones deepening when she detected in his tranquillized features a sense of liberation from a spell which, even as it awakened delight, involved too strenuous a battling with established standards and traditional codes not to confound this stroller through existence. He was at ease now, took her arm, walked to the edge of the copse and back, relieved at his narrow escape from another "devilish mess," although still in a state of placid subjection. "The *leitmotif* pleases," she commented, "but strictly in *tempo commodo*. Poor skipper, you flinch at the *crescendos*, and *fortissimos*, and *furiosos*, don't you, dear? Well, we'll *moderato* then, just to obviate monotony."

And she walked beside him with a certain gracious aloofness, while her heavy hair fell about her face, and hid the mockery in her eyes, the serene resoluteness of her upraised chin.

It was becoming lighter every moment now. The deep greens of the trees began to stand out against the greyness. Bluish tints appeared in the sky, and in the distance a hint of rose-colour crept over the horizon.

"Good-bye, Brida." They had walked back to the heart of the copse. He stopped short and took her hand. "Good-bye, Brida, and thanks for an interlude as troublous as it was beautiful."

He was the charming, tired man of the world now, courtly, gallant, a little jaded, perhaps, a little cantish with his phrases, a little regretful at the passing of this incident, and yet above all, relieved. "I want once again to raise the bumper to the mystery of you. It's crystalline transparency that reflects the wisdom of the ages. You've a gorgeous and chaotic future ahead of you. And I shall always be proud of having known you at the outset. . . . Forgive a spiritless response. Forgive—"

"The morning star!" she broke in. "Look! The morning star!"

She pointed to where, high in the heavens, radiating its little points of light, palpitant with white luminosity, it shone—the great, clear star of dawn—like a signal that invited to delight, that seemed by a supreme authority to have extinguished the light in the tower-room, and the squeamish beacon, and the candle gleam at Point Creel. Brida pushed her hair back from her face. All tingling animation, she looked into Keith Noxon's face, and broke into laughter, into irrepressible laughter, into trills, and tinkles, and roulades of glee.

"You're so wrong, dear! So all wrong! So absurdly, nonsensically all wrong! You're not going to leave me. You're going to—to catch the holiday spirit, skipper. Oh, there's a future ahead of me—true. I mean to have the world at my feet, and never to see it there for having my eyes lifted to some man on a pedestal before me! You're on the pedestal now. And this is the outset of everything for me. You're going to make it a glad, a beautiful outset. You're not going to cringe away, all scared and shaky, at the thought of another scrape. . . . You owe your living to Larry Malone. What difference does that make? And I'm going to marry old Larry Malone. What difference does that make? And

Larry Malone's colleen is going to have a baby. What has that to do with the morning star, and melody in the air, and the beginning of everything splendid for me? . . . Look at me, dear, look at me!"

Meeting his uncertain glance, as if to instil some of her own serene assurance there, as if to formulate a supreme conviction, clear, ringing, exultant came her cry:

"Life's a trifle rancid, dear, but I mean to enjoy it so, just the same!"

She seemed to sing out the great conviction that swept all relevance from the sinister paltriness enmeshing these two—to sing it out in laughter that permeated her whole being, that harmonized with the sounds of a wind and sea whose vigour and freshness acclaimed theirs this carnival creature. All abrim with an auroral dewiness, she stood with high-held head beneath the great, white star of the morning, a figure valiant and virginal. She appeared to be pausing for just an instant longer before stepping over a threshold, to realize this an investiture into office, the starting point of a course of existence whose very richness in promise gave cardinal significance to its initial episode. . . . An investiture into office accompanied by all the solemnity of a rite, and all the exhilarance of a revel. For all that has ever twinkled and teemed, all that has ever surged, seethed, sparkled, heartened, everything blithe, everything lyric, seemed for the moment epitomized in this girl.

Cheeks flushed, eyes bright, lips curled, with strange blues and greens agleam in the raven hair which the wind tossed high above her head, and a delicate iridescence playing through the milkiness of her skin, it was as if all the colour of a mouldy world scoffed were concentred here, as if even the luminous pink that tinged the horizon now were radiating from her. And constantly the mists unfolded, receded, always with the effect of a senile scampering, like giant dotards nudging one another in furtive glee, ducking their heads in homage to this defier of their mandates, even as they dubbed her pariah, and scurried back to statute books that damned.

Combat ahead for this insurgent! And yet there was something martial about the sight of her standing there beneath the morning star, which augured victory, which suggested a crusader against all drab and outworn ideals, who awaited the fray eagerly, all cuirassed in laughter, and with her buckler the belief in an eternal joy of things. . . . No longer pleas nor invitation in her outstretched hands, but command and welcome. Keith Noxon advanced a step toward her. . . .

—Advanced one step, and stopped short. His jaw fell agape. His shoulders sagged. His hand fumbled at his collar, gave it a futile tug, and dropped inert to his side. A long shudder passed over him. He stared dead ahead, as if beholding an apparition at once opprobrious, pitiable, and all-powerful.

X

THE high gods, for all a covert sympathy, vouchsafed but a moment's triumph to a trampler of codes. In the distance, but outlined with marvellous clarity, the unfolding mists revealed a little figure walking slowly at the water-edge, and gazing out toward the horizon—an unwieldy little figure in a silly, pink peignoir, that assumed, beneath the rose-gold tints of dawn, almost a symbolic significance.

It was as if day itself, orgiastic, exhilarant, breaking in a tumult of colour, in a resplendent tribute to all light-hearted and laughter-loving things, were forced by some hostile agency to focus its brightest rays upon this emblem of a jaded standard and warped ideal. Even the wind and sea seemed to mouth a sardonic nuptial song. . . . And Larry Malone's colleen, all unconscious of the man who in the pine copse cringed away from the sight of her, looked out over the sea, comforted, perhaps, by the hazy hopes of all bruised and baffled creatures, musing,

perhaps, on some project to "bring him around."

Brida's face reflected the same good-humoured mockery and light compassion which her affianced's fervour and her mother's outbreak had evoked. She shrugged impatiently. "What difference—"

The abject flinch of the man's whole attitude belied a surface bravado. Brida gasped in amazement when he recoiled at the touch of her hand. His eyes, inflamed and always shifting, swerved guiltily from the figure in the distance to the girl beside him, fixed themselves upon her with that look of antipathy, at once spiritless and appetent, of one no longer eager for a joyous episode, no longer in rapport with a festival atmosphere, but merely prey to a vicious greediness for a temptress whose wiles half-heartedly he resisted, whose meshes sanctimoniously he feigned to tear asunder.

Again his eyes swerved to the pink-clad figure at the water-front, stared with a superstitious awe, as if here were an apparition all-powerful in its very paltriness, that beckoned to sanctuary. . . .

Larry Malone's colleen, by no subtler an expedient than a stroll at dawn, had launched her supreme effort to "bring him around." For the man's dread of too strenuous a conflict, the quake of his soul at the prospect of another scrape, had at last overcome a verve for existence handed down as a legacy from a long line of adventure-loving Noxons. All that was left now of the carefree abandon which had swept this girl to his arms was a slight hint of apology and shame in his shifting glance. And when once again she caught at his hand, with a slight shiver he reeled away from her, as if from something repellent to the fastidious instincts of a reformed rake.

Beneath the staggering impact of the insult, she stood quite motionless, while her face blanched, and expressed in rapid succession, bewilderment, disappointment, swift rage that twisted her features almost into a snarl, apathetic indifference, and finally a certain aloof tenderness, as toward something once part of a cherished and immeasurably remote past. "You couldn't quite catch the holiday spirit, could you, dear? The holiday spirit—I can't quite explain it, but—well, it laughs at a creature in torture, and so comforts. That girl there inspires respect, and yet how she is in any way concerned with—Inspires respect!" She looked at the woman who was walking laboriously in their direction, and then back at him. "Respect."

Upon his face the very greediness which battled with a sense of shame invested him with some of the dignity of hurt and hapless creatures. He seemed to realize that she was sweeping him, though very graciously sweeping him, from his position as first of the pedestalled deities. No trace of worshipfulness now in her attitude, and yet no derision.

"God bungles things so, the poor darling," she whispered. "He, too, has all the majesty of the commonplace."

A little quiver at the corners of her mouth gave promise of a forthcoming smile. The rose tints were already creeping back to her cheeks, and the glow to her eyes. It was only a few minutes before that she had cried out her great conviction, and since then she had passed through amazement and horror, through rage and apathy, but always with a flashing insight which placed upon each passing emotion its just value. It was only an hour or two before that she had come to him so gladly at the urge of a spell in the air which now, at its apex, served merely to acclaim the triumph of Larry Malone's colleen. She had come, all tiptoe impatience, swept by a blithe balminess of spirit that rendered nugatory all ethical dictates, only to be stigmatized at the end as a tawdry temptress. She had come with her eyes lifted in worship to a figure on a pedestal, only to be made aware that the pedestal was bare. With sympathetic mockery she had resisted the pathos of old Malone's declarations, and her mother's pleas,

only to find herself reduced to the same sympathetic mockery before Keith Noxon. . . . And in the face of it all she broke into laughter.

—Into laughter without malice or irony, laughter wherein rich organ tones blent now with the bell-like peals, laughter mellower and sweeter than that which had rippled from her throat before an apparition at the water-edge interrupted its flow, laughter that sounded all the victory of vanquishment. Brida Creel, by sheer force of a gusto for life, could relish even a savage joke played upon herself. Brida Creel had crossed her threshold.

Her little nostrils dilated. "You're inexpressibly dear to me, Keith Noxon! You're my past. Oh, but it's good to feel that I've a future so rich in pasts ahead of me!"

The morning star, fading, still seemed to sparkle with approval. Earth, and sea, and sky were aflame with copper-shot purples, crimsons, green. And there was ritual and revel in the varicoloured suffusion. It was as if inaugural ceremonies were in progress. For no vestige of fevered incompleteness betrayed itself now in the girl. She was launched triumphantly on a course of existence whose prologue, potent to cast a radiance over all that was to follow, by virtue of an ultimate exultant note outweighed in significance this fast-approaching conflict between a high-hearted insurgent, on the one hand, and a dreary world, on the other; outweighed especially the shoddy intricacies of the first chapter, of the chaos ahead for Mrs. Creel, for Larry Malone, and his colleen, and his bride. Brida Creel was ready, supremely ready, ready for everything, ready for combat, ready for defeat after defeat, ready for one maze of crass pettiness after another, ready for no matter how malevolent a trickery fate had in store, ready to enjoy it all—

—And ready, above everything else, to play the reprobate for the assuagement of Keith Noxon's soul. The streak of alloy had finally manifested itself. And yet a little shame still blent with the grovelling greed on his face, shame that would linger there until the greed became a frightened satiation, until an intrigue ended in disaster, and a pattern citizen, reclaimed, penitent, "brought around," returned to the conjugal status. . . .

"Here and now," the girl was whispering, so low that he failed to catch the words, "here and now, when it's all bright and beautiful, your finer instincts rebel. But later—later! Little family dinners for just the four of us, guilty whispers, handclasps on the sly. . . . How you'll wail for a Jezebel's wooings! How you'll fall for a Jezebel's wiles!"

It was at one with her relish, for a joke played upon her that she should recognize a bantering obligation to this erstwhile idol. Just as, a few hours before, she had followed a histrionic flair to mislead her mother, and Larry Malone, so now she gave her head an insolent tilt, and swayed audaciously at the hips as she approached him in hackneyed siren style. . . . But no sooner had her hand touched his than she laid aside her masquerade. It was a very tender mockery that parted her lips, a very real compassion that shone from her eyes. "In my own unregenerate way, skipper, I'll try to play square."

There followed a nod of finality. The prologue was over.

Slowly the woman in the pink peignoir was approaching from the distance. And slowly Brida Creel moved away now over the silky pine needles, looking back over her shoulders with a laughing pity in her eyes. At last she reached the old water-gate. Slowly, step by step, she descended until only her radiant face was visible, then only her eyes and forehead, and finally only a strand of wind-tossed hair.

"I love you!" She sent the lie carolling to him just when, for an instant, her arms shot into the air—eager, white, challenging arms that welcomed a fray with a boisterous sea.

THE RESCUE OF LUCIA DANE

By Louise Winter

BRINCKERHOFF DANE volunteered to meet Angela, concealing his eagerness under the indifferent mask he wore so well nowadays.

Lucia was playing dominoes with Archie Lewis, a fascinating game that allowed hands to touch frequently, and so she merely called to her husband over her shoulder: "Awfully good of you to venture out in this heat, Brinckie, but I'm sure Angela will appreciate it."

"What a blessing an appreciative cousin must be," murmured Lewis, and then he covered Lucia's fingers with his lean, dark hand to prevent her playing on a prohibited double.

Dane, on the edge of the porch, waiting for his car to be brought round, saw the action and smothered a curse. He was a big, heavily built man and entirely at the mercy of his wife who seemed to take a delight in putting him on the rack.

The chauffeur brought the car up, a powerful grey roadster, and Dane got in, dismissed the man and turned so sharply that the car balanced on two wheels for a perilous moment.

But Lucia did not perceive her husband's danger. She was looking up into Lewis's eyes with a question in her own. Lucia was small and dainty, the eternal child-woman who often conceals a mass of worldly knowledge behind an innocent exterior. Born into the frivolous set, with parents who had divorced each other and remarried, with plenty of money at her command and more liberty than was good for any girl to have, she had chosen Brinckerhoff Dane out of a formidable list of suitors. Dane belonged by birth to the same set, but his simple, kindly nature had made him grow up into a misfit. He had adored Lucia from the moment of their meeting, and her selection of him as a husband was still a mystery to the man who never probed for depths in large, dark-blue eyes set wide apart under a low, smooth brow. In the beginning he had been deliriously happy at having carried off his prize and later he blamed himself for much of his misery. It was because he did not understand a girl's delicate nature, in some way his clumsiness must have hurt her, but when, after weeks of mental torture, he had ventured to ask for an explanation, she had just looked at him and smiled.

He told himself over and over again that Lucia did not really care for the men who hung about her, and until Archie Lewis had appeared he had gone on hoping that in time she would tire of her aimless existence. He wanted a home and an heir, and all he had was half a dozen residences and a kissing acquaintance with his wife.

And lately, since Lewis's arrival, she had been chary of her kisses. It was a tangle, but he looked forward to Angela's coming to unravel the knotted skein of his domestic affairs. Angela was older than Lucia; she was an orphan and the two girls had been brought up together under their grandmother's roof. Angela was still unmarried, and some people were afraid of her caustic tongue, but her cousin by marriage knew that underneath her reserved manner was a kindly heart.

The train was late, and Dane thought he had never experienced such heat, but when Angela stepped down from the club-car she looked cool and unruffled.

Her dark eyes lighted up as she caught sight of him. They had seen a good deal of each other since he had entered the lists as a suitor for Lucia's hand and she had acted as a peace-maker on several occasions since their marriage.

When the long grey roadster again took the road toward the sea, she asked: "Who's staying with you now?"

"No one but Archie Lewis. The usual crowd is coming later." Dane scowled, and Angela stole a look at him from under her long lashes. The way he had pronounced Lewis's name told her all she needed to know.

"Archie Lewis." She searched her brain for a clue. "He's just returned from France, hasn't he? Been driving an ambulance over there. I heard he was staying with the Lowries. What's he like?"

The car shot forward with a vicious spurt. "Like a collar ad, with a straight nose and a dinky moustache!" He had all of a healthy man's intolerance of the effeminate touch that mars the modern male.

But Angela did not smile at his outburst. She knew that he must have had unusual provocation to make him lash out like this. "Eve Lowrie raves about him. I suppose his experiences make him out somewhat of a hero."

"If he'd only talk about them, but he doesn't. He talks of the women he met over there, peasants and aristocrats; he bowled 'em all over."

"Brinck, you're jealous!" But she said it gently, and something in her voice made him turn his head so that she could see the misery in his face. "I don't mean petty jealousy of the man, but of his power to charm," she added thoughtfully.

"He's been here three days, and I might as well be wallpaper for all the notice they take of me. And nights he gets out a damned baby guitar and sings the rottenest love songs—I've stood a lot, Angela, but some day things'll get beyond me and I'll raise hell!" He took a long breath and then he continued. "Pardon the swear words, but ordinary English can't express what I feel."

"Don't bother to apologize; I understand."

"I wonder if you do? Do you know why I married Lucia?"

"Yes, because you loved her."

"And have you any idea why she married me? Because it wasn't for love."

Angela attempted to defend her cousin. "She chose you freely and she had plenty to choose from."

"I know; but of late I've fancied she chose me because she thought I'd be easier to fool. I'm a big brute, and I don't look as if I had brains enough to come in out of the wet, but suffering makes a man keen, and I'm beginning to see through her ruses."

"Lucia is such a child." Angela repeated it mechanically, for she thought her cousin's ingenue rôle had been overworked.

Dane was now of the same opinion. "Child, nonsense! She's been married two years, she was out a couple of seasons before that, and she goes with the fastest set on Long Island. She may be careless—I admit she's selfish—but she's not ignorant."

"We all spoiled Lucia. She was grandmother's favourite."

"Well, I'm going to stop the spoiling process. She won't listen to me, but perhaps she will to you, and I want you to tell her that this time I mean business. She either comes back to me as my wife—you understand—or I'll bring matters to a climax." A deadly quality of determination rang through his tones, and in spite of the heat Angela shivered. She realized that this time Lucia had gone too far.

"Don't be hasty, Brinck. Lucia is a very modern wife."

"Then I want the old-fashioned kind, the kind that isn't afraid of maternity."

"You shouldn't have chosen Lucia then. Even as a child she wouldn't play with dolls, but sometimes the maternal instinct comes suddenly, born of a great love."

Dane sighed. "Then I'm afraid it

will never come to Lucia through me."

Angela could not combat that and she lapsed into silence which lasted until they swung through the wide-open gates, past the winding drive and up to the large white house on the summit of a gentle slope. It was not high enough to be called a hill, but it permitted the grounds to be laid out terracewise and to present a wide green expanse to rest the eyes of travel-weary guests.

It was a stifling day and Angela appreciated the cool green lawn of Cedarmere, with its grove that gave its name to the place, stretching down to the Sound.

Lucia rushed forward to meet her cousin.

"Oh, Angela, how ducky you look!" she mumbled against her cousin's neck, and then she led her guest upstairs and chatted of family affairs until Angela had removed some of her travel stains and was ready to go down again for tea.

It was served out of doors on one of the broad verandas that made the house so attractive.

Archie Lewis sauntered up and was presented. He was thin and of medium height, not much of a man compared to Brinckerhoff, but Angela did not undervalue the thick-dark-lashed eyes and the full, red lips showing beneath the slight black moustache.

"I arrived at the Lowries' after you left. Isn't Eve a dear?" She said it purposely, for Eve Lowrie was one of the women Lucia detested.

But Lewis could wriggle out of more delicate situations. "Who am I to combat your opinion, Miss Hart?" he returned gallantly.

Angela caught her breath. This man was dangerous.

Brinckerhoff joined them and they had tea. The conversation lagged.

"It must be frightful in town," suggested Lewis.

Angela faced him. "It was, but fortunately I only passed through."

"You came down from Maine?"

"Yes, I have a little place up there in the woods."

"It must be a relief to lose yourself in a little place. Everything is on such a big scale down here."

"Archie!" Lucia spoke sharply, "and only yesterday you were telling me how you appreciated getting back to civilization!"

"That was yesterday, dear lady. Today I respond to the call of a hut in the wilderness." And he smiled as if deprecating his modest desires.

Dane grunted. "Then why do you stay?" he demanded.

It was so rude that Angela gasped. She expected to hear Lewis resent the speech, but he answered quietly:

"For the sake of something I can't get in the wilderness, the society of charming women." He included both Lucia and her cousin in his low bow, but only Lucia took notice of it.

Angela was watching Dane and fearing an outburst, but although he was a primitive man he had been born to observe certain conventions and he held himself in check. She was glad when tea was over and Lucia suggested resting a while before dinner.

The two women went upstairs and Lucia lingered for a few moments in her cousin's room.

She lighted a cigarette and suddenly she turned to Angela, who was standing at the window gazing at the distant Sound. "I'm so glad you've come," she said sharply. "Brinckie is acting in his usual idiotic manner and you'd better hint to him that I won't put up with this sort of thing much longer!"

Angela wheeled around. This was practically what Brinckerhoff had said. Was the breach already so wide that it was impossible to bridge it over? "What do you mean?" she asked.

"You know I've never pretended to love Brinckie, and it's absurd for him to go on like a madman every time I have a new beau."

"But he loves you and he has never understood the terms on which you married him."

"I've told him often enough, but he's

too stupid to comprehend! Archie has noticed his behaviour and it makes things very difficult."

"I don't believe I'd worry over Mr. Lewis. He isn't the kind you could ever take seriously."

Lucia threw away her cigarette. "I wish I were as sure of myself as I am of him," she said impatiently.

Angela was startled. "You think he loves you?"

"I know it, and if I were quite sure of myself I wouldn't hesitate a moment."

"You're thinking of leaving Brinckie?"

"My dear, it's been done and in my own family."

"Lucia, don't! Your mother lived to repent her divorce."

"That was because of me, but thank goodness I haven't any child to drag me two ways."

"I wish you had. Haven't you ever wanted a child of your own?" Angela asked it wistfully.

"And Brinckie's?" Lucia shuddered delicately. "It would probably be a boy and rough. I hate little boys!"

So Brinckerhoff's dream would never come true through Lucia and Angela wondered if it would not be better to let the break come. In time Brinckerhoff might find a woman who would materialize his dream and he would be so tender with a woman who loved him. He was capable of development, for he was only twenty-eight and he was already a power in the financial world.

This was evidently not the time to present his ultimatum and presently she watched her cousin leave the room with a curious sinking at her heart.

After dinner that night Lewis brought out his ukelele, which Dane had characterized as a damned baby guitar—and Angela was forced to admit that he sang Hawaiian songs with a degree of passion that made them more than suggestive.

The evening passed off without incident, but when Angela went up to bed she had a feeling as if she had been hovering for hours on the brink of a volcano.

The next afternoon a house party arrived for the week-end and Angela hoped that Lucia's duties as hostess would prevent her giving too much of her time to one guest, but in this she was disappointed. Lucia kept on singling Lewis out for conspicuous attention and the cloud on Dane's brow never lifted.

The second night Angela had a moment alone with Dane.

"You see how things are," he said gravely. "I'm afraid the break is very near."

"Brinck! Wait, don't be too hasty!" Angela pleaded.

"This war is a great blessing to men who are breaking their hearts over the inevitable," he said bitterly.

"You mean you'd go over there and court death?"

"I wouldn't leave anyone behind to mourn me."

"Brinck! I can't bear it!" It came out impulsively. She laid her hand on his arm and he looked down into eyes that were wet with tears. "I've always been so fond of you," she said brokenly.

He covered her hand with his and found she was trembling. "Why, Angela," he began, puzzled at this display of emotion in one who was usually so self-contained, but she fled suddenly. She was afraid that his eyes, grown keen of late, might uncover a secret she had jealously guarded for years.

Dane stared after her thoughtfully. He had known Angela even before he had met Lucia, and he had always admired her. Now he wondered for the twentieth time why she had never married. She would have made some man such a splendid wife. But he was too simple to read himself into that mystery.

The house party was very gay, and beneath its frivolous tone Lucia found many opportunities of being alone with Lewis.

One night, when they had disappeared into the shrubbery, Angela waited for them, and when they re-

turned to the house Lucia's eyes were shining like stars. There was no need to ask what had happened, nevertheless, when they went up to bed, Angela followed her cousin into the latter's room, unasked.

"Lucia, it can't be true," she cried, putting both hands on Lucia's shoulders and trying to read beneath the childlike surface.

"But it is true. He loves me and now I know I love him, so to-morrow I'm going to tell Brinckie and ask him to let me go quietly."

Angela's heart seemed to stand still. She had been asked to help Lucia and she had done nothing. She was letting her cousin rush to her own doom without making an effort to save her.

"Suppose you discovered that Lewis wasn't to be trusted?" she began slowly.

Lucia stared. "What do you mean? What do you know? Is it Eve Lowrie? Tell me!"

"I was at the Lowries' just after he left and Eve made no secret of the fact that she was mad about him, almost as mad as you are. No man who was worth while could go from one woman to another in less than a month, dear."

Lucia flung herself down on the couch and clenched her little hands. "I won't give him up, not to Eve, not to anybody!" she said fiercely. "If I can't have him I want to die!"

The tragic intensity of Lucia's tones struck terror to Angela's heart.

"You really care—as much as that?" she asked, wondering how a shallow creature like Archie Lewis could stir such depths of emotion in two women, for Eve Lowrie also cared, there was no doubt of that, either.

Angela dreaded the day. Happiness would come to Lucia, for she usually got what she wanted, but she would climb to happiness over the wreck of a big man's heart.

And would it last? The ease with which he had transferred his affections from Eve to Lucia spoke little for his loyalty. Lucia's mother had openly regretted her divorce and remarriage. Would Lucia meet with the same fate?

And how would Brinckerhoff take the news? Angela could not believe he would let his wife go without a struggle. She almost feared a tragedy which would engulf them all.

But when she got down to breakfast one complication had been removed. Dane had gone up to town on an early train. He would only return in time for dinner, and Lucia had too much sense to launch her bomb then. Most of the house party were leaving; perhaps she could be persuaded to wait with her announcement until all had gone.

The morning was threatening. Low, dark clouds presaged a storm and there was enough electricity in the air to make everyone uncomfortable.

Lucia came down heavy-eyed and irritable, but drifted into a set game of auction with Lewis for her partner. Luck was against them and their losses piled up and in the midst of some exciting bidding a telegram came for Lewis. He did not stop to read it, but crammed it into his pocket and went on with the game.

The first time he was dummy, however, he excused himself and left the room with his unread telegram. When he came back he was smiling.

They left the bridge table for luncheon, and as they went along the hall Lucia asked carelessly: "Good news?"

"No. I'm afraid I'll have to leave you this afternoon."

"Archie, you can't! Not till I've told Brinck!"

"Told him what?" asked Archie Lewis coldly.

"About us."

"The wifely conscience moves in strange grooves, *carissima!* I wouldn't if I were you, there's so little to tell."

Lucia caught her underlip savagely between her little teeth, but there was no time for more then.

She recovered her spirits suddenly and was by far the gayest person at the lunch table.

The telegram had come over the tele-

phone, and Lucia did not scruple to question the footman who had taken it down. When she learned the name of the sender she turned white.

"I won't give him up, not to Eve, not to anybody!" she repeated under her breath. She had always been obstinately self-willed, and she had not always been happy.

She came slowly out on the porch where Angela and Lewis were.

"I'll drive you to the station, Archie, if you must go," she said quietly.

Angela was surprised at the turn affairs had taken. "Are you going today?" Wasn't he man enough to stay and see the thing through?

Lucia answered for him. "Yes, Eve Lowrie's sent for him. What it is to be popular!"

Both of her hearers gasped. Lewis because he did not dream that she would find it out until after his departure and Angela because she remembered the conversation of the night before.

When Lewis, after thanking his hostess perfunctorily, went up to pack, Angela crossed impulsively to her cousin's side.

"Let him go, dear, you see he isn't worth the fight you'd have to make to keep him."

Lucia picked up her driving gloves. "It would be rather nasty, wouldn't it, to have him come back to me after he'd been with her?"

"It would have to be a definite choice between you."

"Yes, that would be best, a definite choice." Lucia looked up with a curious little smile. There was no doubt that she was suffering, but perhaps she would come out finer after it was over.

"Don't go to the station. Have it out here," pleaded Angela.

"I must see him off to be sure he would go," was the enigmatic response.

And then Lewis came down and Angela moved away. She could not watch them drive off together. It seemed too much like an elopement.

They had started early, but it would be an hour before Lucia returned, and Angela went upstairs and changed into a teagown. She would be very careful of what she said to Lucia now. The woman's heart would be raw from a fresh wound and only delicate sympathy would be acceptable. Lucia had been saved from a misstep, but at a frightful cost.

Angela sat on and planned a future for Brinckerhoff and Lucia, reconciled to each other, and herself playing fairy godmother to their little ones. She lost herself in a dream from which she was startled by a shriek. Her door burst open, and Ottilie, Lucia's maid, rushed into the room.

"Madame—madame is dead!" she screamed. "They are bringing her upstairs!"

Not daring to pause for a question, Angela brushed by the maid and saw blackcoated men carrying something between them. They had carried it into Lucia's room, the room in which she had said that if she couldn't have Archie Lewis she wanted to die.

Lewis himself brought up the rear. His face was ashen. When he caught sight of Angela, he rushed forward and caught at her hand. "She saw the train, but I think she wanted to frighten me! Oh, God, you can't suppose she meant us both to go!" he cried.

Angela shook him off. "Oh, hush!" she said, and then she followed the men into the room and gazed down at her cousin's lifeless form. Was it true? Rather than give him up had she tried to kill them both?

Lewis hung around the threshold and Angela presently became conscious of him and he disturbed her.

"You told her you would go?" she asked.

"I never thought she was in earnest. I always meant to go back to Eve when she sent for me." His voice came in a broken whisper.

"Misunderstandings like that cause tragedies. I think you'd better go now, before Brinckerhoff gets home." It would be intolerable to have the two

men there and Lucia dead between them.

Lewis jumped at the chance to get away. The horror of the thing unnerved him and he wanted to put miles between himself and what an hour ago had been a woman who loved him.

He went off quietly and when Dane arrived Angela was alone in the room with Lucia.

He came up to the bed and dropped his hand to her shoulder. She struggled to her knees and faced him. He was very pale, but otherwise composed.

"It was an accident?" He seemed to want her word as confirmation to dispel a vague fear.

"Oh, yes!" She hastened to reassure him. He must never learn that Lucia had driven her car deliberately across the tracks in front of the appoaching train.

He gazed steadily down at the still form that had once had power to thrill him to the depths of his nature, and he wondered why he felt nothing but a great pity. Suddenly he put out his hand and clasped Angela's. "What would I do if I couldn't go to you for comfort?" he said slowly.

Neither looked forward then, but subconsciously each knew that there was a day coming when Brinckerhoff Dane would go to the calm-eyed woman beside him for what he had long sought and what up till now had been denied him.

PHILOSOPHER: A man who realizes he made a mistake when he married his wife, but who admits he would make as obvious a mistake if he were single again.

THE proper way to overcome temptation is to discover a greater temptation.

EVERY man, at some time, wants to marry some woman. Every man, at some time, is married by some woman.

WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY

By Helene Hicks Bowen

AS they fumbled into their seats at the large round table the man glanced at her place-card and, under cover of the caviare, murmured amiably:

"How dare you have a husband, you wild-rose person? You don't look in the least married. I was completely fooled by your girlish look of innocence. Now I suppose we must be careful, since I—"

She gasped and paled effectively.

"You must not talk to me like that," she interrupted.

Then, as he started to speak again,

"Ah, no, no, get yourself in hand. It is very beautiful that our lives should touch like this; I, too, feel the urge of a kindred spirit; the charm of the individual *you* acting upon my own shrinking ego; but we must crush this exquisite blossom. I have loved once, and although that is now a thing of the past, the experience was too painful; although I am again free I will not let myself care a second time."

It was his turn to gasp, but she hurried on:

"I feel it only right that nothing but truth should lie between us for the space of this brief contact. I am a widow, true, but I shall never marry again.

"Hush!" she continued, as he tried to break in. "There is no use in your coaxing me; after this interlude you must go your way, and I shall again take up my burden of loneliness, with only the souvenir of a single joyous memory to link our lives."

Again he essayed to interrupt, his face working strangely, but she would not have it, and shook her head.

"It might be different if I were one of those who are content to philander, but I am too intense, too ardent for that. I cannot accept your devotion, it would not be right, when I have so little to offer in return. I see that you also like olives," nibbling daintily at a little green ball—he had already feverishly gobbled the portion upon his relish dish—"even our physical natures are in perfect attune.

"No, no, do not say it," she urged, as he mouthed spasmodically. "We must be satisfied with this single glimpse into each other's souls. I know that, manlike, arrogant in your own freedom, you would beg me to kill my scruples and be happy at all hazards."

Languishingly she bathed her eyes in his.

"I wasn't going to beg you to do anything of the kind," he blurted out; "I was only trying to warn you that my wife is watching us narrowly from across the table, and that she's a *very* unsympathetic woman."

LADIES AT TWELVE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By George O'Neil

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ELSA, *an attractive young married woman*
RICHARD, *her husband*
ALFRED, *an attractive young man*

[*The curtain rises on almost complete darkness. The only light slants in from a leaded window at the right and reveals a divan and some indistinguishable objects of furniture. There is no sound until a clock lightly and slowly chimes twelve. After a minute or so, a long crack of light shows at the left, widens gradually, and someone comes in. Another moment of silence, and then a voice speaks in a whisper.*

THE VOICE

Alfred!

[*There is no answer.*]

Alfred?

[*A noise of movement is heard at the right, and a man speaks.*]

ALFRED

Yes—yes, I'm here. . .

THE VOICE

(*This time revealing itself as feminine.*) It's twelve; and Richard's light is out.

ALFRED

(*A trifle drowsily.*) We're all right then, aren't we?

THE VOICE

(*Suspiciously.*) Were you sleeping?

ALFRED

Oh, no—anxiously waiting for you, Elsa!

ELSA

(*Petulantly.*) Well, here I am, standing alone in the darkness!

ALFRED

Yes, dear—I'm trying to find you. (*Stumbles.*) Damn! . . . Ah, here you are! Kiss me.

[*A pause.*]

ELSA

That isn't the way you kissed me last night.

ALFRED

You were five minutes late last night, my dear.

ELSA

Don't you think we might risk a little light? This is so unsatisfactory—not knowing where to find your hand in the darkness.

ALFRED

Come sit here where the light from the window falls. Moonlight is better for love than lamps.

[*They move to the divan, and sit where the light finds them.*]

ELSA

What a frightful thing it is that we must go sneaking about, hiding our love in darkness!

ALFRED

The willingness to do mean things for love is one of the joys of loving.

ELSA

I don't agree with you, Alfred. Why should we go on in this way?

ALFRED

Why—? Aren't there many reasons?

ELSA

I love you . . . and you love me.

ALFRED

Most surely; but—

ELSA

But what?

ALFRED

Well, remember, you *have* a husband.

ELSA

My husband —an entirely selfish one. And there are no binding ties—no children. Why should I consider him?

ALFRED

I should think one would consider one's husband—from a sort of habit, you know.

ELSA

Well, no habits are good; and love breaks them all . . . you think it is right, don't you, Alfred?

ALFRED

My dearest, moonlight should never hear love moralize—only manifest. It should hear me telling you all those things that love-loosed tongues will say.

ELSA

Yes, Alfred, you're always saying them! I love you too much to be satisfied with this froth of infatuation. When I go digging about the roots of our affection you tell me to look at the flowers!

ALFRED

My beloved lady, be careful in cutting the earth about that tender plant. Think—its tendrils are delicate, and some of them cling. . . .

ELSA

(*Irritated.*) Oh, Alfred!

ALFRED

Come, be sweet! Let's not spend this hour in useless discussion.

ELSA

Useless discussion! Do you really think it useless—trying to find a way to happiness for us?

ALFRED

Dear, aren't we happy?

ELSA

You amaze me! Happy—! When each minute we are afraid of being discovered—discovered in the ignominy of love?

ALFRED

One can be very happy and uncomfortable at the same time; and one cannot expect to be in love—and comfortable.

ELSA

There you are—evading again with a twisted speech!

ALFRED

But why this sudden restlessness?

ELSA

I've told you—I can't bear this sitting in darkness and feeling as though we were a pair of criminals!

ALFRED

But what would you do—give up our few opportunities for being together alone?

ELSA

No—arrange matters so that we may be together always.

ALFRED

Oh, but my dear—!

ELSA

What is it? That doesn't appeal to you?

ALFRED

Why—yes, of course! But could it —how could it be arranged?

ELSA

Quite easily, really; simply go to my husband and tell him everything. A divorce would be no trouble at all.

ALFRED

A divorce! You don't mean it, really—?

ELSA

Why shouldn't I mean it? Is there any reason? The responsibility—support—?

ALFRED

Oh, no! Yes—yes, of course! But it would be—well, messy, you know.

ELSA

What were you saying a moment ago—about love and comfort?

ALFRED

Well, my dear, I want *you* to be as comfortable as *possible*.

ELSA

(*Accusingly.*) Alfred, I'm beginning to think terrible things!

ALFRED

Beginning—?

ELSA

Oh, you're afraid! You haven't the courage to face the talk we'd cause—or Richard;—is *that* it? You're afraid of Richard?

ALFRED

Nonsense! I'm thinking of you. It's a matter that must be considered carefully. Aside from the question of the future, are you quite sure you're free—conscientiously, to take such a step?

ELSA

Why not? I shouldn't harm Richard by permitting him to divorce me; and it wouldn't hurt him—much—except for his vanity. I don't believe he loves me—I'm not sure—at least, not madly. . . .

ALFRED

I know; but he *has* always been very kind to you—and given you all you've wanted.

ELSA

(*Somewhat loudly.*) Alfred! The idea of your trying to persuade me against freeing myself—for you!

ALFRED

Not persuading you, dear; cautioning you.

ELSA

(*Moving away from him.*) That is too much! I am beginning to see how profound your love for me is.

ALFRED

(*A change in his tone.*) Oh, are you?

ELSA

(*In amazement.*) Alfred!

ALFRED

(*Coolly.*) Well?

ELSA

Is it, or isn't it?

ALFRED

Is it what?

ELSA

Profound?

ALFRED

That sounds rather silly, don't you think?

ELSA

(*Her voice rising.*) Silly—silly, Alfred!

ALFRED

Please, not so loud. You'll have the entire house down on us in a minute.

ELSA

(*Tearfully.*) Oh . . .

[*Suddenly the light is flashed on, and the two jump to their feet.* ELSA *utters a short scream;* ALFRED *upsets a tall vase of flowers in rising. Across the room a man stands leaning against the mantel. He is in a dressing gown; and his hair, slightly grey, is rumpled. Calmly he surveys the pair, who stand looking quite absurd as they stare agape.*

ELSA

(*Her voice not wholly recovered.*) Richard!

RICHARD

Forgive my suddenness. I thought I'd better take a hand in your pleasant affair before you bungled it irretrievably. Really, your words seemed to be carrying you to no delicate conclusion, and you were making a sacrifice of dignity.

ELSA

You heard . . . us?

RICHARD

I did.

ELSA

You sneaked in and listened?

RICHARD

I did not. I was sleeping on the divan, and your voices roused me; *then* I listened.

ELSA

Oh, you did?

RICHARD

Are you surprised that I should eavesdrop when I find my wife meeting my houseguest at midnight in the dark?

ELSA

I should think you would have shown yourself at once.

RICHARD

I daresay it might have been more conventional—dramatically; but perhaps it was a certain curiosity that overcame my chivalry. It is delightful of you to introduce morals, my dear; but rather than crawl on hands and knees from the room—to save you embarrassment—I stayed, and heard.

[ELSA *glances furtively at* ALFRED.]

You are wondering *what?* It seemed to me you were—well, rather throwing yourself at the young man's head. The young man was smothering your practical words in charmingly flowery phrases; and you were losing grace and ground. I thought I might be able to help—someone.

[ELSA *and* ALFRED *continue to stand with little command of ease; her attitude almost succeeds as a certain amount of defiance.*]

We might all be seated while I offer my ideas of the tentative subject. You will grant, surely, that I am entitled to a few. I shall be brief.

ELSA

(*Moving to leave.*) This is an absurd situation.

RICHARD

I agree; but since you're responsible for it, you might stay to play your part.

[ELSA *turns with an expression of petulant anger and leans against a table.* ALFRED *remains awkwardly standing by the divan, while* RICHARD *seats himself and becomes ostentatiously comfortable in a large chair, at the left.*]

ELSA

Please say what you have to say, and don't sit there creating dramatic effects.

RICHARD

My dear, you know you're revelling in the suspense of this. Women spend their lives leading up to climaxes.

ELSA

Please—I've heard all the epigrams about women.

RICHARD

Impossible;—they're always giving us fresh material.

ALFRED

I object to standing here like a butler in a drawing-room comedy.

RICHARD

Have patience. You'll get your lines in a moment. (*He pauses to light a cigarette.*) Now, what are we going to do about it? Obeying the usual order

of things, I believe I should fly into uncontrolled rage; fling furniture about; order both of you from my house, or at least shoot one—either, I suppose. But, of course, we know that's ridiculously inartistic. Like a careful dramatist, I shall consider the material I have, and arrange the consistent dénouement. Here is Elsa, my lovely young wife: she lives in a luxurious house, has all its toys—motors, servants, and the rest. I am not abusive; examining my conscience with meticulousness, I decide that I am a fairly considerate husband,—kind, I add to the category of my virtues. I—ahem—love my wife. (ELSA *examines a paper-weight scrupulously.*) She does not return the affection. Good grounds for divorce? Excellent! Here is a young man—my friend. Visiting me, he takes a fancy to my wife—she to him; he is handsome and engaging. It is all quite natural, for that Nemesis, middle age, has brought his first vindictiveness to the husband:—a desire to be in bed before twelve. My wife's fancy for the young man flowers to love. He—but never mind, perhaps he will do for a surprise; they are the life of drama. I hear my wife tell the young man that she is willing to marry him. (ELSA *tosses her head with great impatience.*) Is the young man consistently elated? (*He looks at* ALFRED, *who stands gazing imperturbably at nothing.*) (*Continuing.*) Is he consistently elated? (*A pause.*) I cannot make my characters speak. The situation is forced.

ELSA

This is undignified, and you are displaying a decided want of taste. (*She starts to the door.*)

RICHARD

(*In a changed tone.*) Just a minute. I'll tell you what I propose to do. I hope I shall please everyone. Elsa, I am going to ask Alfred to take you. (ELSA *turns in surprise; and* ALFRED *looks first at her and then at* RICHARD.) You may get a divorce on whatever grounds you choose. My gallantry will be nicely established in that way.

[ELSA *is obviously at a loss for words.*]

ALFRED

You are very brutal to your wife. I am sorry to place her in this degrading position.

RICHARD

(*Smiles.*) Careful handling can give it a graceful climax, in spite of my clumsiness.

ALFRED

To spare Elsa further humiliation, I shall do my part to end this. You know, of course, that I have no intention of marrying her, or any wish to be involved in extreme difficulties arising between you.

[ELSA *stops a gasp of amazement.*]

RICHARD

One could call you neither altruistic nor delicately chivalrous; but you *are* direct.

ELSA

(*Coming forward, her eyes flashing.*) Stop! You are neither of you skilful with words.

RICHARD

With motives—would be better, I think.

ELSA

I will not stand here while you blunder with my pride! (*To* ALFRED.) Please go.

ALFRED

(*Steps toward* ELSA.) Elsa, it's quite awful. I am sorry. (*She turns away from him. After a moment of hesitancy he goes to the door, where he looks back and smiles slightly.*) I once knew a man who wouldn't intoxicate himself because he loved wine, so he'd only sip it, for the flavour; I shall never marry—I am not a womanhater.

[*He goes out and closes the door.* ELSA *walks slowly to the mantel and stands, gazing into its empty fireplace.*

RICHARD *desultorily paces the room, his hands clasped behind him. There is a long, almost palpable silence, which* RICHARD *at last interrupts.*

RICHARD

Your Prince Charming is gone.

ELSA

(*Turning to look at him coldly.*) Will you please leave me? Aren't you satisfied?

RICHARD

Satisfied? My dear—!

ELSA

Won't you go?

RICHARD

Aren't you going to bed? It's much after twelve.

[ELSA *sits before the fireplace, her back to* RICHARD. *There is another silence.*]

RICHARD

My dear, if ever again—anything should happen—avoid twelve. . . . There's something provocative about twelve. . . . And the lights, dear. . . . If it hadn't been for the dark—

ELSA

(*Rising and frowning.*) What are you going to do about it?

RICHARD

About—?

ELSA

Don't be absurd! About me, of course.

RICHARD

Well, I might cast you out, mightn't I? Or strike you—that would be so nice—unusual.

ELSA

(*Her patience gone.*) Please!

RICHARD

I'll tell you—

ELSA

(*Turning.*) Well?

RICHARD

I shall treat you in the beautiful Christian way.

ELSA

Meaning—?

RICHARD

I shall turn the other cheek. Give you another chance to hurt me, my dear; which you will do—often. You will remember how I forgave you the last time—and how much I loved you in forgiving; and you will go on giving me adventures in the higher moralities.

ELSA

That's an exalted vanity, isn't it?

RICHARD

Perhaps you're right. It's amusing of you to find an obscure explanation; I suppose there is one, always.

ELSA

Yes—I think so.

RICHARD

I wonder—if there's one for you. . . .

ELSA

(*Coming slowly out into the room.*) Could you—find it?

RICHARD

Twelve o'clock—

ELSA

Yes?

RICHARD

Ghost time.

ELSA

(*With a slight smile.*) And my ghost—?

RICHARD

Ah, in spring—romance!—an undiscriminating ghost.

ELSA

There is an ache gets into the heart—light hearts, I suppose.

RICHARD

No—heavy.

ELSA

(*With careful directness.*) Richard, our marriage has become . . . a trifle—uneventful.

RICHARD

Most lives are, Elsa. (*Sighs.*) And what better excuse for an uneventful life than marriage?

ELSA

(*Beginning to arrange the upset vase of flowers.*) You *are* a cynic.

RICHARD

Yes, I believe you are right. Thank heavens I *can* be! You see, a cynic is one who makes a game out of being disappointed.

[ELSA *spends more time than the arranging of the flowers justifies. She is standing in a winsomely fluttered consciousness of* RICHARD'S *direct gaze. Slowly, and unnoticed by them, the door opens, and* ALFRED *stands, hesitantly, at the threshold. He is dressed in a topcoat, and is carrying travelling bags.*]

ALFRED

I beg your pardon. I'd like to come in for a moment.

[ELSA *and* RICHARD *turn to him in startled surprise.*]

ALFRED

I shall manage to catch the late train to town; but before I go—

RICHARD

It isn't really necessary—in the morning it would be easier for you.

ALFRED

Thank you. I shall go at once. But Elsa . . . I am a cad, of course . . . may I talk to you . . . just for a moment?

RICHARD

If you *will* go, I'll call the man to drive you to the station.

ALFRED

No, please don't trouble—

[RICHARD *goes out.*]

ELSA

Is there anything to say, do you think?

ALFRED

There's this, Elsa: I am an orthodox cad, I know. I'm a like a million others I know of;—the unimportant sort to whom nothing seems important.

ELSA

Yes?

ALFRED

And now I'm going to be a fool. I'm going to do something grotesque; but most young men are fools, Elsa.

ELSA

Wisdom does come from its seed slowly.

ALFRED

Yes—Elsa, if you—I—if you will come, Elsa—marriage. . . .

ELSA

(*Looks at him curiously.*) Marriage—?

ALFRED

However it can be arranged! If you are willing—with me, Elsa.

ELSA

(*Begins to laugh.*) Alfred, you were right about young men.

ALFRED

I know; I am glad you think I'm a fool.

ELSA

It's a *kinder* feeling—is that it?

ALFRED

More deserved, I think.

ELSA

Yes, Alfred; you are right. Ladies at twelve—delectable young men—young men in danger! Good-bye, I am appeased.

ALFRED

What I said, Elsa—you still—

ELSA

No.

ALFRED

Remember, then—

ELSA

Alfred, I shall make a game of disappointment. You have given me my first opportunity. There will be compensations for me. Good-bye.

ALFRED

Good-bye, Elsa. I am sorry. (*He starts to go, and meets* RICHARD *in the doorway.*)

RICHARD

The car will take you.

ALFRED

Thank you. Good-bye.

[*Goes out.* RICHARD *comes into the room and busies himself lighting the lamps and switching off the great centre light.*]

RICHARD

Do you mind?

ELSA

No; it's much pleasanter. (*She goes to look at the clock on the mantel; as she glances up its light chime strikes the half hour. She laughs softly.*) Richard—

RICHARD

(*Coming slowly towards her.*) Yes, Elsa?

ELSA

That little clock chimes so lightly that the hours it marks seem inconsequential.

RICHARD

Perhaps they have been.

ELSA

Perhaps they—shall not be.

RICHARD

Elsa . . .

ELSA

(*With a little laugh.*) Richard, will you—turn the other cheek?

RICHARD

Yes, Elsa . . .

[*He bends to her and with a little quick movement she kisses him lightly as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.]

INTEREST

By Patience Trask

SHE listened wearily as he told her of his struggles to attain success.

His plans for the future failed to interest her.

When he said that one time he fell into the crevice of a glacier and almost froze before they rescued him, and that once he lay stricken with the plague in a deserted Chinese village, she yawned.

When he spoke of his mother and his small brother and his sister's baby and his mammonite uncle, she was bored.

* * * * *

A loosened curl, brushing against her cheek, annoyed him.

"There is a curl against your cheek," he said.

"Yes?" she breathed eagerly, pressing against him. .

ONE SON OF ADAM

By Phil Lang and Robert P. Janette

MR. VAN DUSEN laid his pen in its accustomed place on the inkstand, carefully blotted the work of the last moment, and took off the telephone receiver.

"Yes, Van Dusen speaking."

His tone was perhaps a little more rasping than in former years; otherwise his response to the call for the head bookkeeper had not varied in two decades. Innovations were as foreign to Henry Van Dusen as tobacco and strong drink.

He had expected a curt command from the boss, or a customer's inquiry relative to an account. Therefore his scanty grey eyebrows rose in surprise at the voice of Gid Fellows—or rather he who had been Gid Fellows until thirty years' practice in the village transformed him into Doctor Gideon Fellows.

"Your wife has met with a little accident, Henry. Had a fall. Better run out on the two-eight. I'll wait." Then came a provoking click. Either the doctor had hung up or central had cut him off. Henry, still holding the receiver, snapped open his watch. He would just have time to reach Grand Central Station if he took the subway at once.

The watch he disposed of automatically; the receiver, however, seemed to puzzle him—to put it in his pencil pocket—to lay it on the desk?—ah yes, bless me, hang it on the hook! This done, he unwound his legs from the stool and rubberheeled to the locker, where he took out his last year's straw hat and changed his coat, meanwhile instructing the junior clerk to explain his unprecedented departure.

It was not until he reached his seat in the coach that he began to analyze the message which was taking him home before the 5.58 on a Wednesday. But before the train was well under way he had reviewed every possible calamity which could have overtaken Mrs. Van Dusen.

Now as he sped along he again went over the dire conjectures. Where had she fallen? Undoubtedly on the steps or stairs. The front steps? No, not likely. There was no ice this time of year. The stairs, then. Well, perhaps. It did not seem probable, though. Hadn't she been climbing them all these years without mishap? And particularly good stairs they were, too—six-inch riser, nine-inch tread, selected maple. Had he not supervised their installation, and all other details when building the Van Dusen home at Greensward Heights?

Of course, one with high heels might make a misstep on the best of stairs—but Mrs. Van Dusen didn't wear high heels. In fact she frequently had spoken unflatteringly of women who do—*one woman* in particular—and Henry Van Dusen fidgeted as he recalled the occasions.

Then there was the other flight of stairs—those to the attic—narrow, dark and seldom ascended. But why should his wife go to the attic? When anything up there was needed, hadn't she always dispatched him? Well, maybe in this instance there had been urgent need of the object. Maybe—

Henry's face grew graver still, and taking off his glasses he mopped his head. That old distressing feeling, half shudder, half chill, suddenly per-

vaded body and soul—the feeling that heretofore had come upon him only when his wife mentioned "that woman with the high heels." She had seen the woman only once, but that had been sufficient for her to inventory and appraise, to her own satisfaction, if not to Henry's.

No, it was unnecessary to make further speculations. He knew now that there could be but one reason for Mrs. Van Dusen's visit to the attic. *She had gone after the letter!*

He had missed his train the evening before. That trial balance, plague take it, had been to blame. And his explanation at home had been unconvincing. There had been no words—just cool reticence on the part of his wife.

The letter! Yes, that was it. And with the conviction, there appeared before his eyes a vista leading back into the past, illuminated by the light of understanding. The attic, after all, was the place where she had kept the letter for these many years, except, of course, on those memorable occasions when she had mysteriously produced it from some recess in her dress. True, she had rarely unearthed it during the past fifteen years, but at those times, Henry ruefully recalled, the appearance of the letter accomplished its grim purpose. He could picture her, defiant but unagitated, as she tapped the opened envelope on her thumb, and he could see himself yielding earlier in each succeeding domestic combat.

Yes, at the bottom of it all was the letter. Apparently, years ago, she had feared that, despite her cunning, Henry would stumble upon it in his never ceasing, though never obvious, search; and she had found some dark but easily accessible sarcophagus in the attic, from which the epistle—that damning spectre of his past—could be resurrected at will. It was all very plain now. That was why she had insisted upon supervising the attic beneath the eaves. In person she had looked after the rearrangement of trunks, boxes and whatnot up above when the time came for spring housecleaning. He even recalled the mild argument which took place when she recommended burning up some of the old newspapers that he had filed up there on the floor.

"You have so much to do, Henry," she had said. "Surely I can take the attic off your hands!"

And he had given in, little dreaming that her suggestion cloaked a sinister purpose.

Now he could see that she had sent him up for this and that little thing merely to disarm lingering suspicion—to banish any consideration he might have been giving to the attic. And there the letter had reposed, under his very nose, no doubt. What reliance she must have put in the security of the hiding place!

At that, he had not ignored the attic in his periodical, stealthful searches. Indeed, he recalled vividly his exploration of the dusty region above, and he chafed now as he thought how he had been misled by reading "The Purloined Letter." According to Poe, an efficient, but sometimes blundering, policeman divided into geometrical units the quarters to be searched, and minutely examined each in turn. When Henry read this, quite by chance, the suggestion seemed sent from Heaven, and he had acted upon it apace. It was but natural, therefore, that the process eventually should lead him to the attic. But Henry's emulation of the astute investigator had not stopped at copying the efficiency—it also included the blundering.

The momentous but unfruitful day all came back to him now. Mrs. Van Dusen had taken an early train to attend her sister's funeral in a neighbouring town. The boss had let him off to go to the family obsequies. Ah, thoughtful man that he had been! Had he not embraced this opportunity, and rummaged with unhurried thoroughness through the Van Dusen domicile, literally from cellar to garret?

Again the uncanny tremor ran through him, as his mind began to conjure up what might have happened had

his wife found out about that surreptitious search. How fortunate that he had not left some little trace! And suppose she had discovered his greater crime—an absence from the office unaccounted for! . . . Measuring by the past, his trial would have made The Inquisition look like a meeting of the Board of Elders. How futile explanations would have been! Ah, yes, how futile—in view of his failure to make the first truancy appear inconsequential. Would he ever forget that first absence, and the collapse of his defence, which doomed him to the constant and consistent surveillance of Mrs. Van Dusen for twenty-odd years?

On that terrible evening when his wife declined to accept his faltering rebutter, and said: "I have been blind, but now my eyes are open," he had thought that no greater tribulation could visit him. Confident fool, to hold the future so lightly! Had not the real calamity been reserved for the very next night? Then it was that he first saw the letter. And thenceforth he had been committed to "lock-step-and-lights-out" domesticity.

Each poignant detail came back. How Mrs. Van Dusen had played with him! Her strained silence at dinner had bespoken impending ill as significantly as if "Beware" had been written in letters of red upon the spotless tablecloth.

The girl had removed the dessert things. Custard had been the sweet, and forever after custard, in cup, in pie or concealed beneath whipped cream, had given Henry a chill like unto that of an open window in winter. The girl's final exit to the kitchen had whisked away the proverbial straw, and immediately the anchorage of silence and inactivity was lifted. Forthwith Mrs. Van Dusen drew an envelope from her gown and scanning it a moment said:

"Henry, a letter came for you to-day—from that woman. I recognized the monogram, and opened it!"

He recalled how he had reached for it with a forced smile of indifference.

"No, Henry, I shall keep it." The words rang in his ears. "Its contents cannot interest you—not if your vows mean anything. I may wish to refer to it, should I ever doubt you."

Thereafter, under the spell of the letter, Henry had grown to mould his life so that hours, and even minutes, away from her could be accounted for on call.

For weeks there would be no hint of the letter's existence. Then his unfortunate summons to the boss's office at quitting time, or some other trivial incident, would cause the 5.58 to arrive at Greensward Heights without him. His hurried entrance, after coming in on the 6.37, or as once happened, on the 7.5, would be halted abruptly by the look on his wife's face, and his explanation shifted to a foolish commonplace about the weather, as he felt the presence of that haunting letter.

Then when they were seated at the table, Mrs. Van Dusen would inaugurate the melancholy meal with her salutatory, customary on such occasions. But it would not be rendered vocally, as salutatories are wont to be given. No, this one consisted of eloquent reserve, and ominous glances that travelled everywhere, but in Henry's direction. And the dinner thus sauced with silence would proceed dismally, until Henry, breaking under the strain, remarked: "The boss forgets that employees have regular hours to eat."

After this bit of discourse, usually incoherent, Henry would reach for a roll that he did not want especially, but his eyes could follow the outstretched hand, and perhaps see if the letter lurked about. Should it be visible, Henry's hand, suddenly palsied, would return without the roll. When the letter could not be seen, Henry more than likely would take the roll and butter it, regardless of the one on his plate, amply spread. His speech then would become normal, as he added details to his arraignment of the boss. . . .

At this point Henry's reminiscences took a new trend, for the train had stopped at Englewild, the home of a

former friend, Elbert Perkins. Perkins, the asinine jester—Perkins, the positively dangerous fool, had once been a dinner guest at the Van Dusen home, and in a tragic effort to be jocular had remarked: "Well, Henry, how do you like the new typist who left us to go to your office? Some baby, eh? Hope Mrs. Van Dusen doesn't mind your taking her out to lunch once in a while."

Although this had happened ten years ago, and incidentally marked Perkins' last visit to their home, Henry never had been able to pass through Englewild without thinking of one resident there who should have been hung in early youth.

To-day the malignant thoughts incited by Englewild remained longer than usual. In fact it was the familiar cross-streets outskirting Greensward Heights that finally banished them.

Before the train came to a full stop, Henry alighted—a dangerous proceeding, and unexampled, but warranted by the extremity of the occasion. He set off briskly and turned into his street with unslackened speed.

As he went up the walk to his house he saw that the front door was open, the screen door closed. The tenth would soon be here—the date for removing and storing screens, he reflected, as he turned the latch. Luckily the tenth fell on Saturday this year. Therefore this would not be an early morning or late evening chore—he could do it in the afternoon.

The closing of the door behind him brought a slight rustle at the head of the stairs, and two faces peered over the balustrade at the landing—Mrs. Trainor and Mrs. Wilkes, he observed—neighbours of almost like distance on either side of his house. Apparently the women had made up their quarrel—one of long standing, as he remembered it. Heretofore Mrs. Trainor had visited them only when assured that Mrs. Wilkes was occupied elsewhere, and Mrs. Wilkes had followed the same custom. "Neighbours should be neighbourly," was the thought that had come to Henry when he learned how resourcefully the two avoided contact in neutral territory. It was pleasant now to think that they had been brought together in his home.

At that moment there came a step at the top of the stairs, and Henry, ascending, again looked up their shiny length. Doctor Fellows—"Old Gid"—was coming down with faltering tread. Old Gid was getting along now, and had to feel his way, no doubt. Henry held out his hand.

"How are you, Gid? Glad to see you."

The doctor took the hand and held it in both of his.

"Henry," he said, "I hope you'll always be glad to see me—to see your Old Gid, but—" He cleared his throat and dropped his head. "But, Henry, old man, as your doctor—as your friend—I've got to tell you something that—that comes harder than anything I ever said."

Henry clutched the doctor's arm.

"Is it so bad?" he whispered.

The doctor nodded.

"Emily—she—oh, God, Henry, I just can't—"

The tears that came from the kind old eyes and fell upon Henry's hand as he withdrew it completed the message.

"In her room, Henry. The women helped me. They'll stay and do what's to be done. I—I couldn't do any more."

Henry grasped the rail, and pulled up his numb and heavy limbs, step by step. When he got to the landing, the two women came to him, paused for a moment, and passed on down without a word.

At last he reached the door of the room that had been theirs. He halted at the threshold. Even the long minutes coming up the stairs had not prepared him for what might lie beyond. His eyes descended and rested on the little strip of maple, nicely laid, nicely bevelled, as thresholds of careful carpentry should be. It was but a fleeting thought, for the Henry Van Dusen of

the moment just passed seemed to turn back and disappear, while the Henry of now summoned fortitude and looked into the dimly lighted room, with all its familiar things in shadow.

He knew, without going in, what his bereavement would mean. His love had not been merely a passionate incident of youth. It had not been a passing emotion, succeeded by drudgery and forbearance. Nor had he at any time held it lightly, as year followed year. Indeed, it had been so much a part of him through the springtime and summer of their union that the weeds of doubt and accusation which sprang up in later years could not stay its growth. Now, came the irreconcilable realization that his loss was not all of the future—that the periods of discord, not of his making, had caused him to suppress those little acts and words of affection which were his very life.

The still calm of the room came out to him as he stood there, but the consciousness of a presence, known yet strange, held him back. Despite the early hour, the shadows within seemed to grow darker. His watch ticked loudly in his pocket.

At length he looked up and crossed the threshold. His soft steps carried him to her sewing-table. He steadied himself for a moment, and lightly passed his hand over her work-basket.

The feeling of an unfamiliar presence left him, and as he crept along the side of the bed his foot touched something soft—cloth of some sort evidently. He bent down and lifted it. Her apron! Something fell from the folds or from the pocket. An envelope, he could see in the dim light. He picked it up, and felt the border of tape which she had used to preserve it. The letter! At last it was in his hands! But how little that mattered now!

He knelt at her side, and tearing out the sheet of note paper, held it across the bed, into the ray of light that stole in beneath the curtain. There were but four lines. . . .

The letter fluttered from his hand. His face sank into the counterpane.

"And you thought *that*, Emily," he sobbed. "All these years, you thought *that*."

II

It seemed to Henry that the boss had become less harsh. In time the little compliments on his accuracy brought a thrill he had not known before. But there came an afternoon when he realized the emptiness of all the new kindnesses and considerations.

With an invoice to be approved, he had gone to the private office, but paused suddenly at the door on hearing conversation within.

"I tell you, dearie, a man don't know how lucky he is to have a real wife," the boss was saying. "Remember me telling you about old Henry Van Dusen, who lost his wife a few weeks ago? Well, old henpecked Hen, as the boys here call him, is back on the job again, and the first time I ever saw him smile was to-day—just working along, smiling to himself. Suppose he's got another picked out already!"

Henry drew back and returned to his desk to await the departure of the boss's wife. He wished he hadn't heard. But he couldn't help standing there for a minute when his name was mentioned.

The visitor lingered, and Henry's thoughts wandered from the business at hand. He leaned on the high desk and resting his chin in his palm, looked out at the sun setting over the river. And as he stood there, the deep lines in his cheeks softened, and a smile came to his lips.

"You know now," he murmured. "You know now, don't you, Emily?"

QUALITY

By Mary Cullen

I

DOROTHY STUYVESANT LATTERBURY, blushing delicately, in filmy wedding gown, came daintily up the aisle, her gossamer veil floating like mist about her head.

At the altar she stubbed her toe on a potted lily.

Said she to the minister: "That's a hell of a place for a lily!"

II

MARY O'GRADY had not eaten for three days.

A man of blatant attire, gleaming finger-nails and considerable clinking coin smiled at her.

She did not glance in his direction because a little child was watching her with wide solemn eyes.

THE LAST FAY

By Harold Cook

I AM the last fairy that Merlin made out of wisps o' the wind,
I was clad with a cloak of morning mists, with the dawn I was glad,
I danced for men in the moonlight and when in the morning they sought
The prints of my feet they found only drifting needles of pine.

I am the last fairy that was nursed at the bosom of Vivien:
Ah, the Celts in their grey dreams knew me, but now no more do they call
Through the thin sweet song of the rain when I hide by the shadowy eaves,
No more do the doors of the cottage stand ajar for the children of winds.

I am tired, the last fay made by Merlin and Vivien greater than Merlin,
And I would lie down asleep in the tremulous heart of the earth,
Leaving all mortals alone in their anger, their deep buried greed—
But with the last fairy die the sweet maddening cries of the Spring.

LIGHT UPON DARKNESS

By L. S. Mayer

THE train stopped at Elkhart for ten minutes. When it gathered itself together with a chug and again plunged into the path of the sun, every man, woman and child in coach No. 17 knew there was a Presence aboard. In the motley crowd of a day-car a Presence is seldom noted for the one reason that ninety-nine times out of a hundred he hasn't any. The railway magnate choosing to so travel has nothing to distinguish him from his twenty-dollar-a-week clerk. His clothing is cut no better, he is no better groomed and his air of assurance is frequently not so pronounced. A great man of letters may be buffeted about in that flowing tidal stream with no outward and visible sign to stamp him as one of the elect. Or Clotilde in gathered wimple may slip down the aisle, her sainthood unsuspected.

But there was no lack of recognition of this particular Presence. All that has been written in song or story of heavenly movement was summed up in her passage to that vacant left-centre seat. The whole car thrilled to it and bent its gaze left-centreward, but she seemed not to know that she was attracting attention. It was the unconscious grace of a young angel going down one of the streets of Paradise.

The fine black raiment she wore from matchless throat to silken, slender ankle clothed an Aglaia. Nature's supreme touch was upon that glorious form, so softly outlined by the clinging crêpe. And suddenly every other woman in the car became a frump.

The head is held belligerently erect by some women. Others thrust it forward, unpleasantly inquisitive, and others affect a jaunty angle. The Presence carried hers as if she were wearing a crown. That proud lift was altogether royal. But instead of a crown it was a smart black turban with an attractively-angled bow, draped with a short, black veil, the lace edges so caught together at the back as to completely conceal the features of her delicate oval face. A baffling arrangement and one calculated to put the best breeding in the world severely to the test.

Maitland capitulated at once. Maitland—painter of beautiful women with his ideal floating ever just before. He began raving to me in an undertone the minute she was seated. He had found her at last, after running all over the world for fifteen years. Nothing like it outside the Louvre. "God, man! Look at the poise of that head! At those shoulders! The lines of that form!" Already he could see her on the canvas, a branch of pink blossoms at the back of her—a spring-song of loveliness. Only instead of black she should be swathed in pale-green gauze.

And he looked daggers at the conductor who was explaining the timetable to her—an explanation of inordinate and unnecessary length.

He was not alone. The whole male contingent aboard had been hit in varying degrees. Old men straightened up and their weak eyes flashed with the fire of twenty. Fat men smoothed down their waistcoats and thin ones bulged out their chests to surprising circumference. A drummer stopped polishing his nails and cast furtive glances in a folded pocket-mirror before gluing his eyes on the goddess

for the rest of her journey. Two big, good-looking college boys sitting just in front of Maitland and me avowed their intention of getting off at the next station (*hers* we had overheard her tell the conductor in a voice as vibrantly sweet as the D string of a viola), although their destination was twenty miles beyond.

Women feigned not to notice but secretly, admiringly, enviously, their glances flicked her way every few minutes, her astounding grace and high-bred air compelling them.

Speculation was heavy as to her type of beauty, for beautiful she must be every man-jack of us agreed to himself. "The good Lord would never make a form like that without a face to match it," said a bald-headed clergyman just back of me, leaning over to whisper. His companion, who looked like an old actor, compared her statuesque lines to those of Rachel in the days of her young, conquering glory. "The face is probably pure Greek," he said. "I can tell by the classic outline and the set of the head. The Greek of the marble goddesses so difficult to find these modern days, even in Greece."

The train rushed through green, garlanded plains, but no one paid any attention to the scenery.

The college boys, Bob and "Pinkie," were already in a far stage of imaginary acquaintance with the goddess. She had motored with Bob through all the towns in which he had friends, to their envy and open-mouthed admiration, while Pinkie had wandered with her by still waters upon which lay yellow moonlight, and listened to the soughing of the south wind as he pressed her divine hand.

The train slowed down. Maitland leaned to me: "Jack, I must paint that woman! It will be my fortune. I can't let her slip from me. I'm not a fool like those boys there, but I've got to find out where she goes. I've got to know her. I tell you it's *she!* I never was so excited in my life. She may be a royal princess travelling incognito but I'll manage it somehow."

When we reached the station the Presence was the first to rise. Again that triumphant passage, unconscious, lofty, the passengers ranged on each side like so many vassals. She went down the steps as lightly as a floating blossom.

"Here's where I get off," said Bob. He of the dream of still waters followed him. Maitland was not far behind.

Those of us remaining crowded to the windows on the station side. Some one would be there to meet her and she would lift her veil! The mystery behind that opaque thickness would be revealed. Calm, serene, with the fine indifference of the throughbred, she stood on the platform directly facing our coach. Evidently waiting, but who could make that glorious creature *wait!*

The bell clanged. In two minutes the train would start. Were we to be brought to the door of All Perfection and denied a glimpse therein? I wished I had followed Maitland. He stood just below my window and I leaned out and put my hand on his shoulder. The suspense was becoming unbearable.

Suddenly one delicately gloved hand went to her veil and lingered there. Had she seen some one approaching? Interest in the car concentrated itself in one tense, breathless stare. Said Maitland, "This is my supreme hour."

The veil fell back and for five gasping, wonder-eyed seconds she returned our gaze. Then with a faint smile—a smile that had a hint of mockery in it, the young, full-blooded African disappeared into the crowd.

THE SINNERS

By Mifflin Crane

I

WHEN she was an infant her nose was shapelessly small; at maturity her nose was as shapelessly large. Her eyes were little and as lustreless as faded blue calico. She had plenty of straw-coloured hair, but it was never her genius to pin it up becomingly. The angular conformation of her figure lacked any seductiveness. Mary was not a lovely woman.

At the age of eighteen she had hopeful thoughts of marriage. She regularly attended church and took part in the social activities connected with her place of worship, meeting by this device some of the young men of her town. But none of them ever called to see her, and it was not her fortune to at any time have a lover. She read books of romance, and her thoughts turned upon kisses; she imagined the sensations of a caress; she dreamed romantic episodes. Her mind cherished a vocabulary of endearments, and from the lips of imaginary lovers she applied these to herself; she pencilled the love-avowals she found in her books; she committed verses to memory. Yet her dreams had no realization.

When Mary was twenty-two her father died, and three years later the death of her mother followed. She now lived alone. In a year or two more the corners of her lips showed little, immobile lines, and their curve was seldom that of a smile. She had never possessed a confidant for her hopes, and now the expression of them to her inner self was stilled. They were not gone, but they had no voice; they lay in her heart like an entranced body, motionless and heavy.

In her town Mary was esteemed and held to be a very sensible young woman. She had executive capacity, and was the organizer of church entertainments and bazaars. She could add a column of figures, and was secretary and treasurer of the missionary society. Several women had remarked that it was a pity she did not marry, and others said that if the young men had any sense they would inevitably be attracted by Mary's virtues. Unfortunately, all the young men seemed deficient in sense.

At the age of twenty-eight Mary's life appeared to have settled into a certain ineluctable groove. Mary saw nothing ahead, and she no longer dreamed. Her existence from day to day had been so reduced to rules without variation that the unexpected visit of her aunt in this year came with the surprise and effect of a great circumstance. Mary's aunt appeared one day with the suddenness of an act of God. She was accompanied by two large trunks and several hand-bags.

"I've been planning to come east for six months," she said. "And now I'm here! I don't want to make any extra trouble for you, dear, and I'll be in the city a good bit of the time, anyway. I've just come for one grand adventure in shopping!"

This proved to be the case. Mary's aunt spent three or four days each week in New York, returning each time with a mountain of packages. Her purchases were fabulously comprehensive; she exhibited fragile inner vestments; she showed Mary pale ribbons and embroideries. It was all quite incompre-

hensible, and Mary's aunt gave her no adequate explanations. The dénouement came with paralyzing unexpectancy.

One morning Mary's aunt took the local for New York without any special word. Late in the afternoon she returned, but not alone. Pinked by blushes, she presented herself to Mary leaning upon the arm of a middle-aged and not unhandsome man. Behind them a drayman waited for her trunks.

"We were married this morning," she said. "Forgive me! I wanted to surprise you!"

The same evening they left for their honeymoon.

Mary's astonishment was as stupefying as an unexpected drenching with cold water. Her aunt was by no means lovely, moreover she was nearly forty years old. A fire kindled in Mary's heart, that blew up to a leaping flame. Her old desire and her former hope revived. A sense of the insecurity and surprise of life thrilled her.

It was while in this mood that Mary, turning the leaves of a magazine, encountered a startling advertisement. Her eye read a titular two words that beat upon her brain with the effect of a tom-tom. In fascination she stared at the heavy type.

GET MARRIED!

For a few seconds the startling charm of these words chained her to them alone. As an apocalyptic command, the syllables of that magnificent adjuration moved her. Only through the increasing urge of her curiosity did she pass to the explanatory matter they captioned.

Here was unfolded to her an astonishing plan, a highroad to matrimony with the goal in plain sight. An inspired person, touched deeply by the loneliness of marriage-desirous humanity, undertook to bring together in acquaintance those men and women that would receive of his aid. For this service he made no charge whatever. Upon marriage one remitted him a small fee—a mere afterthought.

Yet Mary blushed, so dreadfully unconventional seemed this plan. After the first excitement of its discovery faded, she endeavoured to forget the whole scheme. Yet her mind was infected as by a virus. From hour to hour two words, set in heavy type, flamed in her mind in letters of unquenchable fire. For three days she fought the lure of their command, at last to fall, like a citadel that has been under siege. Mary wrote a hesitant letter of inquiry.

After several days a reply came to her. It congratulated her on her determination to marry. And in conclusion it said this: "We have sent your name to Mr. Jacob Fox, of Muskeego, Indiana. As we accept no clients without investigation, you may be assured that Mr. Fox is an honourable gentleman. He will communicate with you through this office."

Mary waited, with a flushing fever of expectancy.

II

Among other things, Jacob Fox had lacked pulchritude from infancy. His brow was abnormally low and his hair sputtered up from it sparsely, like a tuft of bleached grass struggling for life on a sand-hill. His face had an unpleasant tendency to effloresce into knobby protuberances; his cheeks were as gnarled as a potato. Yet his impulses were generous, and his disposition gentle.

In his town nobody paid him much attention. He went through high school, but during his passage he was never invited to join one of the undergraduate fraternities. He never learned how to dance, for the reason that he saw no prospect of being invited to a dance. He was quite an ordinary student.

After graduation Jacob became assistant in the hardware store owned by his father. For three years he served in this capacity, leaving the store only after the death of his father. He then sold the property and retired to an ineffectual existence alone.

His life was mainly sedentary, yet each spring a mania for walking seized him. During the early bourgeoning months he wandered about Muskeego as if in search of something; he tramped over the level road, covering himself with dust; he loitered in the city park. Sometimes it seemed to him that he was on the brink of an adventure; he stared after girls in passing automobiles; nothing ever happened to him. As the heat of summer made itself manifest he would abandon his walks and take to the cool of his porch.

He had never learned to drink whiskey and he smoked but little. His chief dissipation was the moving pictures. Here, unsuspected, he indulged an imagination that lived lyrically, like a flower in a dust heap, under his herpetic exterior. He preferred the heroines in curls, and once they appeared upon the screen he ceased to follow the incidents of the scenario, but projected himself into adventures with them, a fourth-dimensional inheritor. Seated in his uncomfortable chair, his knobby body faced the screen, an unlovely chrysalis only, from which had passed a glorified and metamorphosed Jacob, who now moved in brave and unseen encounter, the companion of sweet women. Yet in Muskeego Jacob knew no women of any sort, save casually.

He was domestic and often the notion of marriage came to him, but he saw no way to that desideratum. It was not that he fastidiously required a beautiful woman, for his fancy would have furnished the beauty. It was that he lacked as an object any woman, beautiful or otherwise. He was as remotely separated from real romance as a castaway.

One evening he very casually encountered an advertisement in a magazine announcing a matrimonial agency. For a moment he was amused. He read the piece with a smile, conscious of its drollery. And then, quite suddenly, it engaged his mind with a personal significance. Droll or not, marriages probably were brought about by just these unconventional means. He shut the book with a more serious countenance.

In the several days that followed, a resolution developed in his mind. Jacob neither fought nor encouraged it, and his natural impulses gave it growth. Finally he addressed a letter to the advertiser.

Less than a week later he received a reply in which he was given the name of a woman in New Jersey. He was instructed to write to her, and told that she already anticipated a letter from him.

Jacob put off writing for a day or two, inasmuch as he was at a loss just how to begin. At last, under the stress of a strongly felt obligation, he composed a letter that to him seemed very inadequate.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," he said. "You must write to me and tell me all about yourself, for I am sure we want to know each other. I promise you to do the same."

He posted this document and then, overcome by a sense of excitement and romance, waited impatiently for some word in recognition of it.

III

A LETTER with an Indiana postmark came to Mary. As she opened it she blushed; as she read it her blushes deepened. The words were formal and restrained—it was the unconventionality of her situation that coloured Mary's cheeks.

Yet her hopes had ascended mightily and no considerations of propriety could restrain her from an answer. But the wording of it greatly troubled her. She made a rough draft initially, and it was some time before she passed the point of salutation. She began first, "Dear Mr. Fox." Drawing a line through this, she put down, with a warm countenance, "Dear Jacob." Almost immediately she drew her pencil through the words. She stared at the sheet a moment with a feverish uncertainty, confronted with a great dilemma. Presently she re-wrote, "Dear

Jacob," and permitting it to stand, hastened to the body of her letter.

She complied with his wishes—she told him of herself. She listed circumstances about herself like the catalogue description of a work of art. She minutely described the exterior conditions of her life, but she gave him none of her thoughts, her hopes, her desires, her aspirations. And into the envelope in which she mailed her letter she slipped her photograph.

Jacob read her document and multiplied his interest in her words by the imaginative matter with which he interlineated them. He set her photograph before him; it was not a beautiful face he saw; he caused it to appear beautiful. He then determined to satisfy a desire that had possessed him for many years, the great longing to write someone a genuine love letter.

He sat down to his task with poetic enthusiasm. Floridly he wrote, "Mary Adorable," and under this set what follows:

"I was deeply moved, greatly pleased, and immensely interested by your dear letter. I cannot tell you how delighted I am with you. Your picture stands before me, and I am sure its eyes are looking out at me kindly. How I return their generous light! How I desire to see them in their reality!

"I know already that I am greatly fond of you. Ah! I know more! May I say it? I know . . . that I love you!

"I am positive a great happiness awaits us. I want you to marry me. Won't you marry me?"

Astonished and thrilled, Mary read this letter. The precipitancy of his ardour was like a tale from the books she had read. To his concluding query she said:

"How can I answer yet the question you ask me? We scarcely know each other. We must wait until we have learned more about each other."

To this Jacob countered with mystical phrases:

"I feel that I have known you for a long, long time," he wrote. "Can it be —but no! I must not grow superstitious. It is simply that two hearts made to be one from the beginning of time have at last come to know each other. Do not hesitate, my sweetheart. I love you. Say that you will marry me."

Mary questioned, still parrying:

"Is there no way that we can meet first?"

Jacob replied with a bold plan:

"I will come to New York. Meet me the day I arrive; we will see each other and talk together. If you are not then convinced of my love, you can return home and no one will know that we have met."

After a night of torturing uncertainty, Mary wrote to him, consenting to the scheme he had devised. By return mail he set a date for his appearance in the city.

Mary prepared for the trip, all the while confused by a sense of double personality. One of her selves rushed wildly into a mad enterprise, while the other stood by, regarding her activities with a chilling disapproval. Never was Mary more aware of that catalogue of conventional restraints she called her conscience. Yet, under the urge of her dreams and her pent desires, she surged with rebellion, making her preparations with an increased fervour.

She arrived in the city late in the afternoon and hurried to a discreet lodging house, situated well uptown. Jacob, by her last letter, had been made acquainted with the address. He was to meet her there the next morning. Her room fronted on the street. The tall window was hung with a long, yellowed lace curtain, like a veil. Pushing this aside, Mary looked out and down in the street she saw the tops of passing automobiles and the dissonance of the city came into her ears.

The strangeness of her surroundings brought suddenly into her mind her appalling purpose in the city. She dropped the curtain; the pupils of her eyes expanded widely; she looked quickly about the room as if in anticipation of another presence. Her re-

bellion reasserted itself; swiftly, but almost furtively, she crossed the room; she opened a suitcase that lay on the bed, tumbling two or three garments out on the sheet. Exposed now to view lay some very heretical articles that she had purchased.

Like an anarchistic refrain, three rebellious words repeated themselves in her mind, "I don't care!" They sounded recurrent, like the voice of a sin.

She took out a skirt, and slipping off that one she had worn to the city, she put it on. It terminated above her shoe-tops and an inch or two of silk hose was displayed. On Mary's straight legs, accustomed to cotton, the feel of silk produced a simple sensation.

Completing the change in her attire, Mary removed three or four small boxes from her suitcase and turned to the dressing table that stood near her bed. She sat down in front of the mirror. Opening a carton, she took out a jar of white vanishing cream. With the tips of her fingers she rubbed the cream into her face in awkward motions, unused to that exercise. Out of another carton she took a flat cake of rouge, with which she touched her cheeks, creating two splotches of grotesque red. Over the immobile lines of her thin lips she passed a rouge-stick and the paint clung there in palpable incongruity. She pencilled her eyes; they looked out at her from the mirror in startled caricature. And with a piece of chamois she bleached her face with white powder.

It had grown dark outside, and Mary turned on the lights in her room. For some time she lacked the courage to put on her hat and go out to supper. At last, under another systole of rebellion, she mastered her timidities, and putting her room in darkness, she closed the door behind her and went quietly downstairs.

On the street she walked aimlessly at first. Now and again a man stared at her, whereat she quickened her pace. Finally her hunger became assertive and she entered a restaurant. She ate quickly. Two or three men, dining in the place, looked at her and grinned. Mary thought they were trying to flirt with her. She was relieved to get outside again.

A faint sense of terror came to Mary's spirit. She passed a moving picture theatre, and, turning back, she went in, as if in search of shelter. She walked down the darkened aisle slowly. An usher pointed out in the gloom two empty chairs, and she seated herself in one of them.

IV

Jacob Fox arrived in the city several hours before Mary. He endeavoured to appear metropolitan, but nobody gave him any attention. Endless crowds hurried past him, their aims strangely inscrutable. Jacob wondered at their hurry and endeavoured to surmise their goals.

In the afternoon he made his way to the park. He came to a building that housed wild animals, and he pushed in among the crowd of visitors that added their portion to the odour of the place. He stopped in front of a cage in which a lioness paced with feral nervousness about the sleeping bodies of three or four cubs. A man and a woman stood in front of him. The man's hand was passed through the woman's arm, and Jacob saw his fingers press upon her coat sleeve. She turned, and he had a glimpse of her profile, with a smile for her companion curved on her lips. Jacob felt a thrill of anticipation.

His imagination turned to his meeting with Mary. He wondered how she would greet him. He hoped for a manner that was romantic; he desired that their first moments should be instantly lighted with fervour.

And then, he was impatient.

He wished that it was not necessary to wait until the morning. Wandering out of the park, he looked at the face of each girl that passed him, and found all of them adventureful.

A craving for immediate adventure touched him. It seemed incredible that in so vast a place, in so great a clangour, adventure did not come at once to him.

Jacob ate very little supper, for he was indifferent to food. He went out on the streets again that now, in the plumage of night, seemed more potential with romance.

But nothing happened to him, and at last he grew tired. He paused before the posters of a moving picture theatre. An engauded lithograph presented him with the portrait of a little girl in curls. Paying his admission, Jacob went in.

The usher flashed an electric torch, showing him an empty seat. Jacob dropped into it, giving a quick glance to the side. A woman sat in the chair next to him. Her features were indistinguishable, for Jacob's eyes were not yet accustomed to the gloom. A perfume from her crossed his nostrils as he turned to look at the screen.

Suddenly the light of the screen was blotted out, as if a sable curtain had been swiftly dropped over it. The dimmed lights in the house went black. A murmur and a shuffling arose in the audience; two or three girls giggled; a little, laughing scream was heard in the back. There was a running of attendants to locate the trouble.

Jacob felt the woman at his side stir, and by her movement he was made acutely conscious of her. Her perfume seemed stronger, and he breathed it like a wine. Again she stirred and he felt her arm press against his sleeve.

The darkness was impenetrable. He could not see her face. Into the moment crowded all his desires of adventure, and an abandon that drew its strength from the darkness possessed him. He turned swiftly, putting out his hands. They closed over her face.

At his touch he felt her head draw back—and then yield. He drew her face toward him and searched for her lips. He found them, and they clung to his intensely. For moments, their lips touching, both were immobile, like figures in a florid painting.

And then the woman drew back suddenly, and Jacob's hands slipped from her cheeks, falling over her arm. The embrace broken, he was assailed by fears, his life-long timidities possessed him utterly. A dread of the moment when the lights would come up filled his mind. He arose quickly, and half running, stumbled up the aisle toward the exit, where an usher pressed an electric torch. He passed out to the street, breathing rapidly.

And, relaxed in her chair, Mary seemed not to breathe. She heard the man who had kissed her rise and hurry away, and her ears followed his stumbling steps. The substance of her life was streaked with lurid colours; she was conscious of amazing deviltry; she was frightened.

V

SEATED in the parlour of her lodging house, Mary looked nervously at the clock and waited. A drab morning light came in through the windows. She was dressed now as she had been on the moment of leaving her home. Her cheeks had their customary pallor and her lips were without colour.

She heard the bell ring. A maid answered the summons and a male voice that spoke her name came to her ears. She arose quickly and stood before the door.

Jacob entered the room.

He recognized her, for he had looked at her photograph a thousand times. She stood before him, straight and pale, and his imagination at once clothed her in garments of idealism. He felt that he should break into lyric speech, that he should take her tenderly in his arms. Yet his lips refused to form words, and his hands fumbled along the seams of his trousers.

Into Mary's mind and into Jacob's mind came the remembrance of the kiss they had known the night before. Looking at Jacob, Mary thrilled. She did not repent her sinning, although she

knew it was over. From this man, whom she was to marry, she would have one flaming secret, never to be spoken, never for him to know!

And Jacob, looking at Mary, thinking of his second of fire in the darkness, knew there was one moment, in the confessions of his life he might subsequently give her, that he would never tell, that she would never learn!

"This . . . this is Mary?" he asked, haltingly.

"Yes . . . Jacob . . ." she returned.

His impulse was to press her to him; her desire was to fall into his arms. But the daylight came through the window mercilessly. . . .

"How do you do?" said Jacob.

"How do you do?" said Mary.

They shook hands.

DISTANCES

By Louis Untermeyer

I READ your note, and with it comes
  Your fresh and intimate mystery;
It stirs my blood as though great drums
  Were calling out in me.

Out of the struggling lines, your hand
  Gropes and your soft eyes make me start;
Your lips brush mine, although we stand
  A hundred miles apart.

Yet when we two come face to face,
  I feel a greater sense of loss;
There seems to be a widening space
  We cannot hope to cross.

The distance grows, it stretches far,
  Even when we live heart to heart:
You hold me close—and yet we are
  Ten thousand miles apart!

THE coldest heart always excels in paying clever compliments. For this reason love-thirsty women generally prefer stammerers.

WHEN a woman audibly doubts a man's sincerity she is positive, at last, that he is sincere.

AN OLD JEST

By George Barron

THE moon is smiling broadly to-night. He has heard an old jest told again. The girl looking into my eyes is warmly pale in his radiance, his cold light has dimmed the brilliance of her cheeks, and touched her lips with purple. She is listening, enthralled, for I have been telling her the customary things. Perhaps I have been unusually silent, therefore she is doubly convinced. Perhaps I have been unusually brief, therefore she is waiting eagerly for more. Perhaps I have been unusually vague, therefore she is anxious for details. Sufficient that she is interested.

The moon is smiling broadly to-night. He has heard an old jest told again.

RETORT COURTEOUS

By John McClure

BEAUTY, beauty
Cannot be
Always gay and good to see:
Beauty withers certainly,
Lady, lady!

I have loved and I have lost:
It is you shall count the cost.
You have broke my heart in two:
It shall be as good as new.
But your loveliness shall fade,

Wither, vanish like a shade,
Like an echo, like a flower—
It is fading at this hour.
Then when you are wan and grey,
Men shall look another way.

Lady, lady,
Can you tell
Which of us is nearer hell?
Can you tell it, tell it me,
Lady, lady!

THE SINISTER SEX

By Ben Hecht

I

A SPIRITUAL dyspepsia was upon Ballad McArthur. Thus his soul was lean and yellow. There are some men who are able, because of a peculiar capacity for illusion, to look upon life and perceive it to be a roaring and fascinating affair. Give them a smile from a long-legged stupid woman with a pair of shining eyes and they walk about with their chests out, and tap their cigarettes on the backs of their hands before lighting them, and exhibit a gusto incomprehensible to one face to face with the ultimate nothingness of things, incomprehensible to Ballad McArthur.

A curious race, these men. Bustling about their business as if it all meant something or mattered a whoop! Primping and grimacing before women as if there was something, some great and luxurious twist to *that!* Planning and scheming about these women, fencing, intriguing and giving vent to violent excitements as if there was something unusual and mysterious about the business!

The soul of Ballad McArthur, when it had passed its thirty-fourth year, grew leaner and yellower. He had his philosophy. Indeed, given a vocabulary, he might have put Schopenhauer to shame. But although his adjectives were few and dependent chiefly upon the Deity for their punch, his manner was complete, his bearing left nothing in doubt. It was his custom to hold brief and cosmic conversation with Padraic Rafferty, the white-aproned adjutant presiding behind the bar off Runson's Café. At five o'clock each afternoon McArthur presented himself for the ministrations of Padraic Rafferty, fortifying himself for his evening's work with two shots of Bourbon and eight minutes of joy-shattering and illusion-smashing converse.

The theme of this daily dialogue was usually no less a matter than Life, with Woman as a sinister side issue. Concerning Life, Ballad McArthur held forth in words of arresting finality. Concerning Woman his discourse was ever primitive and unbeautiful. That the ladies were all alike and that all of them were bad was The Ballad's pithy argument. And having delivered himself thereof and wiped his lips, it was his wont to progress with the indifference of a man deaf, dumb and blind through the smear of tables, drinkers, waiters and bus boys that crowded the flamboyant interior of Runson's Café at 5.30 each afternoon. Then, seating himself at the piano, he nodded curtly to the violin and clarinet, invariably on the job ahead of him. He threw back his head, his eyes fastened with stoical calm upon the torso of a nymph stencilled with other decorations high on the wall, and then he cut loose.

There was about the nightly performance of Ballad McArthur at the piano in Runson's Café a precision of touch, an infallibility of tempo which stamped him as a man of accomplishments. And, in fact, in Ballad's repertoire there were no distinctions. A Chopin valse or "The Livery Stable Blues," a thing from Brahms or one of the rollicking cacophonies of his own invention, "Hearts and Flowers," "The Spring Song," "The Boyards' March," the "Humoresque," the "Danse Macabre,"

the latest hit in rag and the oldest concert knockout, he played them all—a lean and immobile mandarin of the piano. They were, these tunes, part and parcel of the ultimate nothingness of things, the monotonous obbligatos to which a world drank beer, nibbled club sandwiches, fourflushed about the labels and the temperatures of wine bottles, and disported itself with a mysterious though pathetic zeal on the dance floor space between the tables from 5.30 until one, when a benevolent municipality released him, Ballad McArthur, from further duties.

Such cynicism as was McArthur's is not achieved casually and as one acquires a knowledge of the distance from Zenia, Ohio, to Passadumkeag, Maine. A vast schooling is necessary, a close attention to detail, a constant application to the business in hand. And in achieving his attitude toward life McArthur had not leaped at conclusions. Rather had these conclusions overtaken him. And thus The Ballad's cynicism was not the cynicism of callow and pompous youth—the out-of-tune vibrations of a vacuous vanity! It will only add to the unnecessary detail of this record to dwell even with caution upon The Ballad's past. Let it be known that he had with painstaking effort tasted of this and of that, loved here and loved there, graduated from the agitations of adolescence, that he had, in short, as the romanticists put it, lived. And that at thirty-four his soul was indeed an encyclopædia of experience, his heart a mausoleum of as many emotions as it is given a man with an undeveloped vocabulary to experience.

And having thus taken The Ballad's unsavoury and disillusioned past for granted, and having touched lightly upon the characteristics of the present which somewhat distinguished him above the rank and file of pianobodies, we arrive fresh and open for further information at a rather difficult twist in the dyspeptic evolution of McArthur's lean and yellow soul. He fell in love. By this is not meant that he underwent a birth of raptures and desires, a rejuvenation of jaded corpuscles. To one privy to the intricate idiocies of sex, profoundly grounded in the ultimate nothingness of things, love does not come in the guise dear to the new and old O. Henrys.

It was a night in April when she appeared beside The Ballad's piano, a sheaf of music in her hand and a curious timidity in her eye.

"I'm Dolores," she said, holding forth the music, "and I'm to sing here."

McArthur turned and confronted a young woman dressed with an almost exaggerated modesty, wide-eyed, dark-haired, oval-faced and hesitant. For a moment she stared with a strange intensity at McArthur.

"Mr. McArthur," she faltered, "you are Mr. McArthur? Here . . . is my music."

The Ballad experienced a sudden and inexplicable irritation. Something about the creature speaking to him thus for the first time leaped out and entangled itself in his emotions. He returned her stare, accepted the music from her and slapped it into place on the piano.

"All right," he said and wheeled about on his stool.

Dolores' début in Runson's Café was attended with more than the normal success in such matters. There was about her a charm, a certain quaint anachronism, for she was, or affected to be, timid. She sang in a sweet round voice, such as is sometimes revealed by a maiden performing for company in the drawing-room of her parents' home. Runson's, while not a rendezvous of evil, was yet accustomed to other things. The michievous abandon of young women who sang sly songs and kicked up their dresses at the proper intervals, who flashed stockings and adroit lingerie, who winked their eyes and pouted with their lips had invariably been part of the entertainment provided. And so, by the simple device of concealing her legs and her throat and by the added ruse of neither winking nor pouting, Dolores arrested the attention of her audience.

The success of her début was repeated night after night, and as is the case among a people secretly addicted to pious thoughts, the creature's modesty and virtue became more than her other talents a topic for conversation among those who ate, drank and danced in Runson's. Her age was also a matter of beguiling mystery. To men with bald heads she was eighteen. To men more weighted with hair and less with years she was all of twenty-one. To women she was twenty-five if a day. To Ballad McArthur she was an ageless irritating verification of his cherished theory that all women are born idiots and suffer a rapid decline from the day of their weaning.

For The Ballad had not yet become aware that the emotions Dolores aroused within him were the cramped and distorted heralds of love. Night after night he played her accompaniments, listening with a critically unmoved ear to her round, almost lisping voice, and wondering mildly how she had ever drifted into the business. Concerning the modesty and virtue which had distinguished Dolores from the first, he passed through several cynical attitudes. His keen eyes had noted the absence of jewellery and had been startled once by a glimpse of the most depressing of all sanities, cotton stockings. Nevertheless, he held out.

Things in this unnecessary world are not always what they seem and all that is gilded is not gold. A ripe philosophy, if somewhat withered in spots. And yet McArthur found himself more and more engaging in a sort of dual monologue. There was a part of him which continued cold and unmoved by the evidence. And there was a part of him which took note of the fact that spring had come into the city, that the sun shone vividly upon the great buildings, that cotton stockings after all argued either an absence of taste or a presence of super virtue, and that the clarinet and the violin had been rebuked without hysteria for certain cynical overtures.

II

The throes of love's maturing are of interest chiefly to old maids. They have neither the psychology nor the logic which appeals to a thinking, seasoned reader. We pass them by, saluting them with an all-wise smile, and arrive at a night late in May on which certain events important to this record transpired.

It happened, as such things sometimes do when a man's nature is in conflict with itself, that The Ballad was loitering without the Café long after the hour appointed for his work. A desire which he refused to admit to himself kept him from quitting the pavement. Dusk had fallen. The lights of the city were beginning to write their yellow script in the air. People were streaming by in endless little syncopating groups. McArthur kept his eye upon them, an eye which waited, aye hungered, for a blue hat with a ribbon about it and a pair of familiarly wide, dark eyes. The Ballad's innermost and uppermost emotion was guilt, savage, desperate guilt. The flush of shame crept in and out of his cheek, the warmth of indignation vivified his spirit. In vain did he offer soft and delicate vindications to himself.

Walking almost hidden in the crowd, he spied her and by the leap and the inane convolutions of his thought he knew with the clarity that comes to men doomed that he, McArthur, was lost.

"I would like," he said as she paused beside him, "to take you home to-night, if you don't mind."

An eager little smile moulded the lips of the woman into a crescent. She would not mind. She would be pleased. And clearing his throat in lieu of further speech, The Ballad watched her enter via the ladies' entrance, himself darting in for the belated ministrations of his friend, Padraic Rafferty. The daily dialogue this time, strange as it may appear to the untutored, was more violent and acrimonious than ever.

McArthur outdid himself. Several of the thirsty, sensing diversion, mouched over along the bar and contributed an attentive ear. But even as he talked, cursed and fumed against things as they were and were not, there was in McArthur an unreasoning elation. There was in him the Spring which eternally threatens all men, whatever the condition of their soul. And later, at the piano, McArthur banged out the fandangoes of the dance, ripped through the snorting syncopate, with a gusto not easily to be reconciled in a man so profoundly grounded in the ultimate nothingness of things.

As he played this time the music entered The Ballad's head, and raced from cell to cell after his thought, entangling it, confusing it. And what The Ballad thought, although perhaps immaterial as a contribution toward the progress of the race, will bear recording. For it was strange thought, all things considered. It was thought of Dolores who sang, the Dolores of the photograph rack outside the Café, of smiles that might illumine the eyes of Dolores and curve her lips in a manner remarkably fetching. It was thought of the miracle of encountering modesty and charm after so many years of disillusion, of discovering a woman who had escaped the disgusting and natural heritage of her sex—deceit and vanity.

Forgotten as if made of mist and blown out of existence by a puff, the cynicism of April. Dead the shrewd, tongue-in-cheek attitude of February. And the memories which might have warned, might have pointed their sapient fingers into the future, were likewise strangely dormant. Here was a woman above all other women, a creature pure and noble, to whom sin was a word and no more and to whom life was the caress of sweet thoughts and gentle virtue. Somewhat garbled, to be sure, these meditations. But Ballad McArthur played them on the piano, sang them in his heart and smiled them upon the torso of the nymph stencilled high above his head. Thus do the mighty fall, thus the Cæsars of cynicism shed their hard-earned laurels.

There is, in the streets of the city after midnight, a loneliness as corrupting as the silence of country lanes. And there is about the moon which kindles its ghost faces in the windows of many buildings a seduction as potent as the silver which ravishes the seashore in the night.

The Ballad's fingers had closed upon the fingers of his companion and without words they walked on and on. And because only of the physical law that all journeys must end, they at length ceased their walking and took to standing in front of a little wooden house that crouched in the shadows. Here it was that Dolores lived. Here they remained standing and what happened, happened, and what was, was.

"Dolores," whispered the McArthur, the erstwhile saturnine McArthur, "Dolores, Dolores, I never thought I'd love like this. But you're so different."

But why eavesdrop upon the great and inevitable inanity? There are some scribblers who reveal an almost loathsome morbidity in such matters. With deliberate elation they chatter of caresses and phrases, of vows and activities sacred to the idiocy of the race. We pass on, averting the eye, sealing the lips. Truly there are some things which no self-respecting realist of records will suffer to come between him and art. And thus we touch with a deft tolerance upon this night and upon subsequent nights, upon these kisses and upon their inevitable repetitions. The McArthur was lost. In his ears sang the angels, in his heart the seraphim rioted, in his eyes were ever sunsets and sunrises and the will o' the wisp colours of illusion. At the piano his fingers betrayed their long training and stumbled. His chords leaped forth violent and confused. There was love in his heart.

III

For a month such things as have been hinted at endured and increased. Alone in the hotel he had inhabited for five

years, Ballad McArthur communed with himself. The wariness which had at first succeeded in tempering his flights of communing was now another part of the past. Over and over he communed concerning his great fortune, his undeserved fortune. And through the cadenzas of his communing ran always the note which sounded most sweetly in his soul. There were exceptions to the theory he had in his misery achieved. There were women like Dolores. There was Dolores.

It was well along in June that McArthur's brain entered the situation. From some limbo emerged the idea of marriage. This was foreign matter for The Ballad to speculate upon. It had the allure of novelty, the fascination of all unknown things. And above all it appealed vigorously because of its simple and practical nature. To think, for McArthur, was to act, and the proposal with its "Yes" marked a new stage in his emotions.

Two days thereafter he was seated in the modest parlour of the modest rooming house in which Dolores lived. He had persuaded the manager at the Café to give him a two weeks' respite and Dolores had received a similar vacation. They were, on this evening, discussing the future. Ah, this future! It was a topic to which McArthur of late reverted in thought or speech on the slightest provocation. This future was something otherwise than the past, something as strange as a journey into fairyland.

"Dolores," said McArthur, sitting close and speaking softly, "what's the use of waiting? Let's hustle the thing up."

Dolores, smiling in the darkness that had come into the room—it was early evening—nodded her head.

"I'm willing, Bal," she answered. "But . . . I've been wanting to tell you something first. I don't want to marry you without telling you this something."

The McArthur, as men do with whom the Fates make sport, laughed amiably.

"Very well," said he, "out with your little something and then away to the clergyman's."

For reply Dolores coiled an appealing arm about his neck and drew his head towards her.

"Oh, you're going to be so surprised," she murmured. "But I'm afraid. . . ."

"Come, come," said The Ballad and egged her on with a kiss.

"Well," Dolores began and into her voice crept a curiously solemn note, "I really don't have to tell you, but I'm going to. It wouldn't be fair. I've always been a good girl . . . since."

"Since!" echoed the McArthur.

"Yes, since," said Dolores. She was looking at him intently. "You've spoken so often of my . . . goodness and everything, I think it's only fair. . . ."

And despite the amazing seriousness of the situation, Dolores exploded in a strange little laugh.

"Oh, Bal," she gurgled, "you're so funny."

McArthur, whose heart had been indulging in miserable pyrotechnics during this prelude, seized upon her little laugh and cuddled it, spread it over his thought, listened to it with his soul long after it had ended. For the McArthur was trembling. A man cannot have lived for years privy to the ultimate nothingness of things without retaining some shred of shrewdness even under such conditions as these.

"It was when I was a little girl about sixteen, going on seventeen," Dolores went on, her voice still mysteriously elate. "I was a waitress in my dad's hotel in Goshen. I was so young, Bal, and so tired of living in a little town, and I'd never seen anybody real before."

"For God's sake!" the McArthur blurted forth. "What are you talking about? Tell me, quick."

His trembling had assumed the proportions of an ague.

Dolores, with a quaint little note of mockery in her voice, a note that utterly escaped the feverish attention of McArthur, went on.

"Don't get the fidgets so, Bal. You make me feel like something in a melodrama. Now, listen quietly and don't interrupt, please, dearest. There was a man came to Goshen. He was an actor and he stopped at Dad's little hotel. He played the piano in the little vaudeville theatre on Main Street. And I waited on him at meal time and we talked. And then one evening, oh, Bal! don't, please. Listen to it all and don't be so excited."

"Go on," groaned the McArthur. He was sitting stiff and upright in his chair.

"That's better, dearest," Dolores continued. "And then one evening we went walking. He was such a wonderful man. I fell in love with him. It was the first time I'd been in love. And he said he loved me. I believed him, just as I believed you this time. But I was a kid then and—well. . . ."

Dolores regarded the silent, immobile figure of her sweetheart, noted the pallor of his face which shone in the dark, and then, with another strange little laugh, leaned toward him and whispered:

"Don't you remember?"

The question went unanswered. No word came from Ballad McArthur, no sound.

"Don't you remember, Bal, the little waitress in Goshen, Indiana, nine years ago, that you made love to and . . . left the next day without a word. Oh, Bal, think!"

Ballad McArthur turned his eyes toward the young woman and opened his mouth.

"Remember?" he echoed.

"Yes, darling, it was you. Oh, it was you. That's . . . that's why I told you. I recognized you the first night I came to the Café. I hadn't seen you since or heard from you. But I knew you."

"Me!" cried McArthur. "You're insane!"

Dolores bit her lip. Tears came out of her eyes. In a voice somewhat broken she rushed on:

"Bal, you haven't forgotten? Tell me you haven't. Don't you remember? You sat at the table under the window with the vines around it. And you always ordered grapefruit in the morning."

An inarticulate noise issued from the throat of McArthur. Receiving no reply, Dolores rushed on:

"Yes, and you were at the Goshen Opera House and played the piano there with another man who sang and played the banjo. A short little man, Bal. And you told me you loved me. And I . . . I believed you. . . ."

A silence fell upon the two. The McArthur's deep breathing was the only sound in the room. From the distance came the derisive cry of an auto horn. At length McArthur spoke.

"It wasn't me," he said. "It wasn't me. It was somebody else."

"For God's sake," Dolores cried, seizing his arm, "don't! . . . Bal, you're breaking my heart!"

"It was somebody else," groaned Ballad McArthur. "I don't remember. . . ."

"Bal . . . Bal . . . Stop and think. We walked along the road . . . Oh, Bal . . . You said . . . you said . . ."

"It wasn't me," groaned the McArthur again.

"And you sang 'Coon, Coon, Coon, I wish My Colour Would Fade.' And the little short man played the banjo. I mean he sang it and you played it on the piano. 'Coon, Coon, Coon . . .'"

Ballad McArthur's hand went slowly to his eyes. His lips compressed and he drew a long breath.

"Now you remember," went on Dolores. "In Goshen, the little waitress. You called me Forget-me-not . . . Little Forget-me-not . . . Now you remember, don't you? . . ."

"I remember," spake the McArthur slowly, "of doing a vaudeville turn, yes, but I don't remember playing in Goshen. Wait a minute."

"The Ivy Hotel," blurted Dolores.

"The Ivy Hotel," repeated McArthur softly.

"Oh, how can you forget?" Dolores went on, her voice become tearful. "I

never forgot. I waited to hear from you . . . so long . . . I was true to you . . . so long. Until I met you I never looked at another man. I came to Chicago and took music lessons after Dad died. And when I saw you at the piano that first night . . . I knew that God . . . that God had guided me . . ."

"Goshen," whispered McArthur, "I . . . I . . . recall now. Oh!"

With an abrupt movement he jumped to his feet.

"And you forgot!" murmured Dolores. "You forgot all about it! You forgot the little waitress!"

Into McArthur's brain a memory vague and distant as some dim shape upon far waters crept. It drew closer, struggling out of the mists of time, struggling as if for life. It swept past the McArthur's inner eye, a vague, confused thing, out of focus, out of line.

Upon it crowded other memories, memories of girls with yellow hair, other than the hair of Dolores, memories of towns never before remembered, memories of walks through village streets. Which one, which one? A dizziness assailed McArthur. Faces, strange, dim faces, floated back and forth within his thought. Names, garbled and jumbled, leaped into his brain. Ah, now he remembered. But no, that was in Ohio somewhere, after he had split with Chesty Collins. He remembered Chesty. Chesty played the banjo and sang. They had toured the Middle West on a small vaudeville circuit, he, Ballad, at the piano. Goshen! Good God! What had happened in Goshen nine years ago?

And then slowly in McArthur's thoughts drifted a clear image, a clear recollection. The faces vying for recognition retreated before it. Like wraiths they had come out of the tomb of the McArthur's heart to haunt him. Now only one of them remained, the girlish, dark-eyed face of a little waitress . . . nine years ago . . . the Ivy Hotel . . . Yes!

"I remember," whispered the McArthur slowly. "But . . . I didn't think it was you. I . . . I thought you . . . you were different."

"Different!" cried Dolores. "What do you mean, dear?"

"I thought . . ." But Ballad McArthur could not articulate the strange and intricate thought which struggled within him, which darkened something within him. Dolores, at his side on the parlour couch, was weeping. Her soft little sobs were punctuated with the phrase, "And you forgot!"

McArthur's hand caressed the hair of her lowered head.

"I didn't, I didn't," he repeated over and over. "Only I wasn't thinking of you as being someone who . . ."

The word stuck deep in his throat and fell back into his heart like some barbed thing.

"Sinned!"

It echoed monotonously in his mind. Bending forward, he kissed Dolores on the lips. It was still early. But an unrest had come into McArthur. He sighed.

"I want to think," he said softly. "I'll call you up in the morning."

Dolores, propelled by a bewildering intuition, leaped to her feet. Her arms circled her distracted lover.

"Oh, Bal," she cried against his coat. "Don't go . . . like this!"

IV

The following week in the life of Ballad McArthur was a period during which it was given to the accomplished pianist of Runson's Café to perceive the futility of thought, to understand the strange mercurial quality of meditation. For three days he absented himself from the presence of Dolores. He walked the streets by sunlight and by moonlight. Like some strong swimmer battling in a horizonless sea was the McArthur in the tumbling and chaotic mass of the thoughts, the queries, the conclusions which assailed him from moment to moment. For these three days he sought truthfully and sincerely to straighten out the curious snarl in which the situation presented itself.

After all, he had been the man. There was a slight chance that Dolores was mistaken. His own memory of the affair was so vague, so tenuous. But no, he had been the man. He remembered. But this Ballad McArthur of nine years ago! He remembered him, too, a worthless fellow, a low, fanciful debauchee. And it was to such a one that Dolores had given herself! And he had believed her, by the nine Gods he had believed her . . . otherwise. That was why he had fallen in love with her. Hell and damnation! . . . all women were alike. . . .

It was this last conclusion which took the deepest root. Let us be varied in our metaphors. It was this conclusion which was the rock upon which the submerged McArthur climbed out of his sea. Hell and damnation . . . all women were alike! To bed with McArthur went this sinister thought. Into the street it followed him. A dark, sullen grimace came into his face. It was a grimace which Padraic Rafferty, the bartender, recognized and hailed with delight when The Ballad hove into view in the second week of his vacation. It was the old McArthur come to his senses, and Padraic Rafferty, who was a man of perceptions, knew and in his own way understood.

"What'll it be?" said he.

"Bourbon," said the McArthur. "Have one, Pat."

And they drank as men drink when they plight a troth. And having drank the McArthur wiped his lips and smiled, a lean, sallow smile. His eyes gleamed into the eyes of his friend.

"Ho," he grinned, "you know what I've always told you? Well, it's true. True as the Gospel ain't. Women are born deceivers. And what's more, there ain't a mother's daughter among them that is any better than the rest."

The McArthur gazed defiantly into the eyes of the Rafferty. "S'true," he said, and waited for some insane contradiction.

"I've always agreed with you, Mac," answered Padraic Rafferty, "and I always will on that point."

"That being settled," smiled McArthur, "where's the boss. I think I'll get back into harness. To-night."

And thus it came about that Ballad McArthur at 5.30 walked through the smear of tables, drinkers, waiters, that crowded the flamboyant interior of Runson's Café and seated himself at the piano with a curt nod at the clarinet and the violin. He had determined. There was in his heart a strange ache, the ache of something not quite dead. But at this he smiled. Soon it would drag its tired self into the mausoleum wherein many such other things lay in peace.

"Dolores." He repeated the name as he fumbled with the leaves of a new march. She wouldn't come back. The McArthur's brain had long ago closed itself to the finer points of the situation, to certain elastic and almost insufferable thoughts which had kept him awake for six nights. There remained only the thought, "I believed in her. I thought she was good. . . . And . . . she was like the rest. . . ."

And so, with the curious smile of a man privy to the ultimate nothingness of things, Ballad McArthur banged forth in precise and infallible tempo a thing of sharps and flats and wailing harmonies whose very title was unknown to him.

WHEN a woman isn't talking about her friends she is usually giving them something to talk about.

THE ADVENTURESS

By L. M. Hussey

AT the scratching sound below, Mrs. Gilroy awakened from her slumber. Her ears, at least, had not been asleep, but, during the obliviousness of her other faculties, had been listening for this very sound and now communicated it to her mind with the arousing effect of a cold shower. She sat up in bed and waited.

Only a second passed, and the soft scraping, as if from the movement of a clumsy rat, was resumed. It was a sound so slight, remote, so uncertain, that it was audible only because the night was still and all the day-noises of the streets were hushed. But at the resumption of this faint disturbance Mrs. Gilroy slipped over the edge of the bed, put on a peignoir and a pair of slippers and hurried out into the hall. She did not pause at the stairs, but descended them rapidly, with a mechanical precision in her movements that argued an activity to which she was not new. When she reached the lower hall the sound was more manifest; it proceeded from the front door.

She drew the peignoir more closely about her. She stepped to the vestibule door and opened it.

The black splotch of a man was now visible against the glass of the outer door. Mrs. Gilroy gave his figure a second of scrutiny from behind the glass —a formality only, for she had been certain of his identity when first awakened by his fumbling attempts at the keyhole. She then opened the door and confronted him, her husband.

Her head was up, her figure was poised rather magnificently. There was a tenseness, an expectancy in her attitude, as if she were set for a race. She eyed her husband with a touch of curiosity in her glance. A commingled odour of alcohol and cigars blew in with the night air.

"Here I am!" he said, a certain mellow legato in his voice.

Mrs. Gilroy said nothing. She maintained her expectant pose; she waited for some more characteristic manifestation of her husband's mood.

"I'm a-standing here!" he announced.

This he propounded with great firmness, with even a faint flavour of belligerency. The woman moved back a little, and her eyes, catching up the gleams of the outer lights, sparkled with chatoyant fires. Her soft breathing, audible in the stillness of the hall, came with a quickened rhythm. Mr. Gilroy appeared to have come home in his bellicose mood; the next half hour promised excitement.

"Come in," she said.

At the sound of her voice he lifted his face, thrust it forward and peered in at her. A band of light from the street lamp, a little below the house, crossed her face with a pale, luminous diagonal. Her lips were a little parted; her blue, cool eyes looked intently at her husband's face. He stared at her and with the fixity of his eyes a change came over his countenance. The faint, belligerent frown dissolved from his forehead and the droop of his mouth passed into the upward curve of a smile. A beatific blandness overspread his entire face.

"Be-autiful Woman!" he exclaimed, fervidly and caressingly.

He stepped over the doorsill. Mrs. Gilroy drew back into the hall, passing out of the ghostly effulgence that had rested on her like an apparition, dis-

appearing. A little, surprised sigh escaped her. Gilroy was always puzzling! It was never quite possible to be sure of him, although she was sensitive to the mutability of his rummy humours.

He walked into the vestibule and closed the door with a meticulous effort at silence. He tiptoed into the hall and groped his way to his wife. His hand touched her arm; it dropped to her cool fingers; he raised them to his lips with a ponderous gallantry. She accepted his caress; she was motionless in the darkness; a smile on her lip was hidden in the shadow. Gilroy dropped her hand and smiled amorously.

"My Queen Madeleine!" he said.

Madeleine slipped her arm through his.

"You're tired," she whispered persuasively. "Don't you think we'd better go upstairs?"

"Must have a toast first!" Gilroy exclaimed.

The woman laughed softly, and her voice was resonated in the silent house to a full volume of tinkling sound.

"You're always bewildering!" she said to him.

She led him into the dining-room. Turning the switch, a suspended globe became luminous; the white tablecloth beneath it sparkled like snow in the first sunlight. The room was filled with a glow, and Gilroy stood blinking at his wife.

She walked to the sideboard, opened the lower cabinet, and removed a decanter and two small glasses. She filled them at the table, and held out one to Gilroy. He received it, and struck a romantic attitude. His two fingers and thumb, holding the glass, were raised a little above his head, and swayed gently, as if marking a subtle rhythm. The red fluid trembled in the glass. His eyebrows, finely drawn, were lifted over his brown, handsome eyes, and his lips smiled, for a moment articulating nothing. He fixed his glance on his wife, and examined her face with a pleased scrutiny. She herself smiled and waited for him to speak. The glass in his hand swayed through a slightly wider arc.

"I drink this glass," he began, "to the . . . to . . . to a . . ."

He paused and frowned a little; the corners of his mouth turned down. He sought an eloquent word, a luminous phrase to express his emotion.

". . . Be-autiful Woman!" he exclaimed finally.

He put the glass to his lips and drank; Madeleine drank with him.

Then, with a swift movement, she crossed the room and turned out the lights. She was at his side in a second, guiding him by a firm grasp upon his arm. She pushed him through the door, through the hall, started him up the stairs.

"Now we'll go to bed!" she exclaimed.

The swiftness of her strategy bewildered him, and he had been assisted to the second floor before he had a second to conceive any grounds for objection. It was useless then to declare himself in opposition to her. She hurried him through the upper hall and into his room. She turned on the lights and helped him to take off his coat.

In a moment he sank on his bed and fell instantly to sleep.

The woman, her hands dropped at her sides, looked down at him. Her lips were shaped into an ironic curve, her eyebrows were a little lifted, her eyes lustrously wide. She drew in her breath quickly.

The sleeping man was incalculable in his alcoholic moods. At all times there was a certain excitement in getting him safely into bed, and this was accomplished only by the exercise of superior cunning. As Madeleine stood observing him she experienced a pleasant thrill of victory, that was never absent from these occasions. Still gazing at him, she saw his mouth drop open. Gilroy began to snore. The woman laughed a little, crossed the room, and turned out the light. She passed through the corridor into her own room, divested herself of her peignoir and slippers, and lay down again. Presently she slept,

this time without any attentiveness for a possible scratching at the front door.

II

GILROY came down to breakfast in a bad humour. He was physically and mentally bilious. He greeted his wife with a scowl, pushed his grape-fruit away from him and gulped several swallows of hot coffee.

"Pleasant day," said his wife dulcetly.

"Madeleine," said Gilroy, "don't try to provoke me. I regret nothing. It's not in my disposition to regret. You don't understand!"

"Understand what?"

"I suppose I wasn't drunk last night?"

"You most emphatically were drunk!"

"You don't approve?"

"Oh . . . of course, I'm delighted!"

"There's no sympathy in you, Madeleine. You don't understand. There's an adventure in getting drunk. It lifts a man out of the commonplace. Very few men can control their mediocrity when they're drunk. The trouble with you is, you have no sense for adventure, no nose for it at all."

He delivered this oratorically, and because he had a great appetence for paradox, it put him in a better humour. He smiled and ate his breakfast with more relish.

"Well, I'll ask you to leave off adventure for to-night," remarked Madeleine.

Gilroy was putting on his overcoat.

"Don't ask me anything," he said.

He smiled, kissed his wife, and left the house.

She walked out to the kitchen and had an interview with the maid. She then went upstairs and completed her toilet, that had only been perfunctorily accomplished before breakfast. She put on a blue dress, for some moments stared at herself in the mirror, and then brushed her long hair with slow, mechanical strokes. Finally, she stood up and walked to the window. The morning sunlight, cold and austere, was coming through the curtains.

Madeleine looked out. Men and women were passing hurriedly to work. There was a drabness about their haste, an intentness without enthusiasm.

Madeleine sighed. She was bored and a little melancholy. The sunlight touched her hair, intensifying its heavy lustre, creating a living glow in the dark coils, as if from the vitality of a resident spirit. It fell over her face, her skin became transparent, and the lifeless apathy of her features grew more pronounced. She dropped the window curtain and walked slowly out of the room.

It promised to be a dull day.

It proved to be a dull day. Madeleine was without impulses or desires. One after another she rejected projects that occurred to her. In the afternoon she thought of going out; she dressed, and then decided not to. Later her attention wandered to the evening. A wish to go to the theatre possessed her.

She called Gilroy on the telephone, but he was not in his office. Several times she endeavoured to talk to him, but on each occasion he was still absent.

At half-past five the telephone bell rang. Madeleine recognized her husband's voice.

"I've been trying to get you all afternoon," she said.

"Too bad. Madeleine, I called you up to tell you I wouldn't be home for dinner."

"You—"

"Haven't time to explain. Don't expect me."

He hung up; Madeleine stood for a second with the receiver in her hand, and then snapped it into its hook.

The prospect of a dull evening alone appeared insufferable. She thought of Gilroy. Evidently he planned more adventure. Madeleine remembered his words at the breakfast table. It seemed to her that her life was forever without incident. For a moment she thought bitterly of Gilroy and blamed him.

A moment later she turned her blame upon herself. She remembered oppor-

tunities, she recollected chances she had ignored. She thought suddenly of a man named Hannum.

Gilroy brought him to the house from time to time. On each occasion Madeleine had correctly interpreted his smile. But she had refused to encourage him, even to the most innocuous flirtation. Once or twice he had called her on the telephone. She conversed with him in frigid impersonality.

Now she thought of him. Essentially he was no more attractive to her in this moment than he had ever been; he had acquired no sudden allure. But Madeleine wanted something to happen. She stood in the hall staring down at the carpet, one foot pushed irresolutely forward. With an impulsive decision she walked to the telephone and searched in the directory for a number.

She found Hannum at his club. She told him her name.

"Mrs. Gilroy! Certainly!"

"You're surprised that I called you?"

"I'm delighted!"

"I don't suppose I should have done so. . . ."

"For me it is one of the most pleasant things you could possibly have done."

"I want to ask a favour of you. . . . I'm bored to-night. I have nothing to do!"

"Eh? Nothing to do? The first thing then is to have dinner with me."

"That's kind of you, but I'd rather not. I'd rather you'd call for me and take me somewhere after dinner."

Of course he consented effusively.

Madeleine hung up the receiver with a little shrug of her shoulders. She smiled; she wondered what thoughts were running through Hannum's head. Her call must have been a breath-taking surprise.

She dressed with an increasing expectancy. She employed a finesse in her toilet that was unusual, although she was never precisely a perfunctory person. She touched her hair with deft fingers until its artful waves were artlessly intriguing. She circled her neck with a band of seed-pearls that seemed a part of her nacreous throat. Standing before a pier-glass, she contemplated herself, a very lovely woman.

The bell rang, and she surmised that Hannum had called. She went downstairs and found him seated in the drawing-room. He stood up quickly and she took his extended hand.

He was smiling and, almost like a caress, his eye passed from the heavy glow of her hair to her throat circled with pearls, and to her radiant shoulders. Madeline felt a little irritated. Hannum was a heavily handsome man, and upon his features was inscribed that curious flavour of a leer that Puritan influence has put into the unaffected and pagan joy of the senses.

"I thought you'd like to take in a show; I've got tickets. We can go somewhere and have a little dance afterward."

"That's exactly what I would like," said Madeleine.

He adjusted her cloak; his fingers touched her. Again she experienced a sensation of annoyance.

His car was waiting outside. They got in and moved off noiselessly through the streets. During the ride Hannum leaned close to her and spoke always through a smile that had something of the artificial unpleasantness of a grimace. Fortunately, he was willing to sustain most of the conversation, and Madeleine sat in silence, struggling with a growing disappointment. Her vague expectancy, that had given her a certain, subtle thrill as she dressed, was not being fulfilled. She was glad when they reached the theatre.

It was a poor performance. Hannum, observing her ennui, bent close to her at the beginning of the last act and spoke in a whisper.

"This is more or less rotten bad, what?"

"Well, I am not *very* enthused."

"I'm sorry. I feel the same way as you. Shall we go out and hunt up a little fun?"

"Perhaps it would be more interesting. . . ."

They left the playhouse together.

"Something that slides down easy, a bit to eat, and some Jazz—we'll both feel better," remarked Hannum.

He took her to a popular restaurant. They went up in an elevator shared by another man and a girl. The girl was clinging to her escort with open frankness; her carmined lips were smiling and she laughed. Madeleine wondered what she found mirthful.

They chose a table in the big room, now filling rapidly. In the centre was a dancing floor on which fox-trotting was in progress. Brasses blared in the air in rhythmic noise. Hannum ordered cocktails and afterwards insisted on champagne. He smiled with an immense satisfaction as the bottle was pulled out of the ice. The wine frothed in their glasses. Madeleine drank with him and turned a little to look about the room. A man not far distant raised his eyebrows and smiled at her faintly. A tremor, the ghost of a shrug, agitated her shoulders, and she turned her eyes elsewhere. She was apathetic; she was disappointed; she was bored.

Hannum praised the wine, and she acquiesced without enthusiasm. She was no connoisseur of wines, and cared little about them. Once more she examined the people in the room. Her eye was caught by the red-lipped girl who had ascended with them in the elevator. The girl, clinging to the arm of her companion, was walking to the dancing floor. For a moment Madeleine thought her silly, then she envied her vivacity.

She danced with Hannum, and was no longer interested enough to feel irritated at his touch. He held her close, and his hand touched her. They went back to their table and Hannum ordered more champagne.

As his glass was filled again, Madeleine looked at him with a start of interest. She noticed the deeper red of his cheeks, the laxity of his lips as he spoke, the glisten of his eye. She made a little toast, drank her glass, and urged more champagne upon him. He returned with a little toast of his own and they drank again.

Madeleine examined his eyes with interest, and observed that their glisten had increased; they resembled, a trifle, two glazed porcelain marbles. She encouraged him to speak, and a lack of co-ordination between his thought and his articulating muscles was becoming manifest. Madeleine's eyes sparkled and a pleasant thrill passed over her like the tingle of icy water, for she now felt sure that Hannum was getting squiffy.

He was certainly a dull person when sober, but she knew well that men were likely enough to undergo an interesting metempsychosis by alcohol.

As the minutes passed she watched his symptoms with the anxiety of a mother attending a sick child. She smiled upon him graciously, leaning across the little table. She permitted him to touch her white hand as it lay on the cloth. Her cheeks had a faint, tremulous colour, and she waited, with fluttering pleasure, for his first manifestation of a definitely new mood. He drank his champagne in the radiance of her smiles.

But his new mood did not come!

He only suffered a declension into an inebriate showing of the mood that had been his from the first.

He exhibited an increasing desire to fondle her, as if she were a kitten. He smiled with flaccid lips.

He leaned toward her grimacing, a cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth.

Madeleine perceived that she had been in error, but another hope remained. It might take great cunning to get rid of him.

"We must go now," she said.

He stood up obediently. He followed her among the tables to the cloak room. They went down in the elevator, and he pressed closely to her side.

The night air came to their nostrils, and upon Hannum it seemed to act like more champagne. He staggered across the pavement. With a quick

movement Madeleine seized his arm and guided him to his car.

"Where'll we go now?" he asked.

"We'll take you home!" she said decisively.

He laughed with crapulous idiocy.

She pushed him into the car and directed the chauffeur to drive to his club. In the close, closed quarters of the car Hannum's mouth fell open, and he went to sleep. The woman stared at him in angry disappointment. He was utterly uninteresting!

They reached his club, and the chauffeur and the doorman helped him up the steps. Madeleine told the man not to bother about her.

"I'll get a taxi," she said.

She went home, staring out upon streets that were hopelessly commonplace.

III

THE house was dark as she entered. She went upstairs and walked through the hall to her husband's room. She looked inside and found it unoccupied. As she turned away she heard an immense pounding at the front door. She stopped, surprised, and listened. The pounding was repeated, with an increased vigour; it resounded through the house like blows upon a huge drum. Her eyes widened, her heart beat faster. She hurried to the stairs and descended.

Gilroy was at the door as she opened it.

His hat was tilted belligerently over his eyes.

"Old man Gilroy is a-standing here!" he exclaimed, loudly.

Madeleine experienced a warm passing of her blood through her veins as if his voice held a quick stimulant to her heart.

"Come in!" she said.

"Come in!" he thundered. "Don't command me, my woman! I don't take orders—I give 'em."

"You come in!" she repeated.

"You—"

He lurched toward her violently, and the door slammed to like a report of heavy ordnance. Madeleine perceived his rush in time to escape before his bulk overwhelmed her.

In a thrill of excitement she retreated into the hall swiftly. Gilroy's hat fell off and rolled in front of him like an unwieldy bomb. He stumbled across the carpet, cursing, his hands stretched out and groping, like a blind monster. She could hear his heavy breathing, and she drew in her own breath in quick, strong gasps. She stood erect, poised like a waiting Amazon, while the man lurched toward her. She waited until he had nearly reached her, and then jumped aside, ran behind him before his bewildered faculties had appreciated her swift dodge, and seizing his coat collar with both hands she shook him to and fro, violently, impetuously, flinging all her strength into her white, virile arms, until his muscles flexed under her bewildering attack, and he swayed like a branch in an angry and tempestuous wind. Suddenly ceasing to shake him, she stiffened her arms and pushed him in front of her.

"Get upstairs!" she cried.

She half dragged him up the steps. Inarticulate sounds tumbled out of his fallen mouth. They reached the top and Madeleine shoved him ahead of her through the hall. She flung him into his room and slammed the door upon him.

For a moment she stood outside his door, breathing fast. Then she walked swiftly to her own room. She turned on the light. Her hair had fallen over her shoulders, where it caressed the pearl of her skin in lustrous waves. Her eyes were wide and luminous. A carmine flush glowed in her cheeks like the bright stain of red berries.

She smiled, and reached back to unhook her frock.

She felt now a languorous content; the saturnine humours of the day had passed from her spirit.

It was an adventure to live with an incalculable man like Gilroy.

Gilroy was one of the most interesting men in the world!

HAROLDINE

By Latrobe Carroll

I

HAROLDINE was bored. Nothing happened in Lucerne. She felt a surge of rebellion as she walked beside her aunt. For two weeks she hadn't met anyone under fifty, or gone rowing, or climbed even a hill. It was very discouraging to a girl of sixteen. She hated the Hotel Alpenblick, with its reading-room encrusted with gold, where elderly Germans sat about and complained of draughts and rustled newspapers and wrinkled up their foreheads when she opened the door a trifle suddenly. It was so dreary that even her aunt disliked it, and at that very moment they were on their way to new quarters in another hotel, the Grand.

Haroldine felt sure that in spite of its name it would be drearier than the Alpenblick. Gloomily she anticipated its melancholy stretches of carpeted hall, its vast reading and writing-rooms, where no one ever met anybody. She hadn't talked to a young man for months, she reflected; she wondered if it were because she looked so young. As she walked along the quai she wished her skirt were longer. It was humiliating to be thought a child. She disliked her hat, too; a broad-brimmed hat with cherries on it. Who but a child ever wore a broad hat with cherries messing about on the brim? She hated her braid; abruptly she put her hand behind her and gave it a petulant jerk. How was it possible to look eighteen with that detestable appendage cluttering her back? It was all very depressing. But she found it impossible to be gloomy long, for the air was a delicate stimulant and the lake was slapping the stone quai with brisk, foam-crested little waves.

"Oh, aunty," she asked suddenly, "can't we take a boat? And I will row you!"

Miss Fry shook her head.

"Only the other day I observed in the newspapers," she said, "that two people were drowned on this very lake. How anyone could be so foolish—"

"Oh, but *please*, aunty!" Haroldine interrupted. "I'll be so careful and we'll fringe along the shore, and I'll barely breathe!"

Miss Fry, a believer in self-control, pursed her lips.

"I should think you would have learned, Haroldine," she said, "that you will never get anything from me by begging."

Haroldine didn't want her aunt to see the tears in her eyes. She felt sure that Miss Fry wouldn't be sympathetic. She felt that her aunt might even take a beastly pleasure in seeing tears in her eyes. So she turned her head abruptly and was startled to find herself gazing into the face of a very good-looking young man. At least she thought him handsome, though he was considerably blurred. When she had winked the tears away and could see him clearly he was better looking than ever. He wasn't well dressed, but he had a flowing, black, interesting tie and really superb brown eyes. He regarded her gravely, and she was immediately conscious of an odd, very pleasant throb. It was a little like an electric shock, only a much more natural, every-day sort of feeling. He passed, and Haroldine fixed her eyes on his back, hoping with intensity that he would turn round. Then:

"Oh, heavens!" she breathed.

He *had* turned round and boldly looked into her eyes. Her face glowed. When he disappeared in the throng she felt desperately forlorn. She was silent for a time, twisting her handkerchief into compact knots. She decided to make a final appeal.

"Aunty," she asked, with a little hope in her voice, "can't we go up in the airship? I noticed it was making a trip to-morrow."

Miss Fry began to speak as though her niece had touched a trigger within her:

"Haroldine, I don't know what's been the matter with you for the last few days. You've been dissatisfied with absolutely everything. And now, out of sheer restlessness, you want to risk both our lives in that airship! Really, I don't understand you!"

Haroldine knew that if she didn't get away she should burst into tears. And she loathed the idea of bursting into tears.

"Aunty," she said, trying to steady her voice, "may I go and look in that store?"

Her aunt consented, and she turned away with a quick gush of relief. To get away — only to get away! She crossed the street, stood before the shop window, and gazed at an embroidered table-cover waveringly gorgeous through tears. Poignantly she stamped her foot again and again and again.

"Oh, damn, damn, damn, damn, damn, *damn!*" she forced the words out in passionate little gusts of breath, and felt better, though she found she had bitten her tongue rather badly. She turned to follow her aunt, and then something peculiar happened: her feet became the dominant part of her and faced her about in precisely the opposite direction! She walked to the entrance of a large hotel near by, hesitated for a moment at the door, and then went in.

II

WHEN she came out her shoulders were innocent of a single strand of hair. And wonder of wonders! The cherries no longer adorned her hat. Its severe lines were unmarred by a single crimson globule. Her eyes were sparkling as she stepped into the throng on the quai. Was he still there? Had she misread his glance? She wasn't sure whether she wanted to be spoken to after all. In fact, as she thought it over, she was sure she didn't. Why not look for her aunt—and then she saw him. He was crossing the street obliquely and would be beside her in an instant. Under her blouse Haroldine's heart thumped.

"You stunning thing," she said to herself. "You stunning, stunning thing!"

He approached her and spoke in just the soft voice she hoped he had:

"Pardon, but I see you are lonely. I am ver' lonely. We promenade a little, yes?"

"Why" — Haroldine gasped, "why, yes!"

Side by side they walked along for an instant. Haroldine remembered her aunt.

"Only," she added, "let's get away from the quai. I don't like it."

They crossed the avenue and plunged into the maze of streets that intersect Lucerne.

"It is a mos' charming day, yes?" he remarked.

"Yes," Haroldine assented.

She was trembling a little and felt oddly faint. It was silly—she wondered if she were going to be ill.

"Can't we," she ventured, "can't you take me somewhere to eat?"

He looked surprised, but smiled charmingly. When he smiled she thought him like her favourite actor.

"Mos' certainly," he said. "We go take some cakes in a *patisserie*, yes? I also, I have the hunger like the devil."

This reassured her. Emptiness created a bond between them.

"Where," she asked presently, "did you get that funny, nice tie?"

He seemed startled.

"But it is an artist's tie," he explained.

"Oh, she said.

There was silence for a time.

"You know something?" he asked at length.

"What?" she demanded.

He looked down into her eyes.

"You are very beautiful!" he said.

She started, abruptly troubled, but with her embarrassment was blended a pleasant gush of emotion.

"I'm afraid," she said, daring a glance into his eyes, "that you're a fearful flatterer."

"But no," he protested. "I swear it is the truth. Your eyes, your hair, your cheeks—and my God, your most lovely little nose!"

Haroldine laughed.

"Go on!" she said, encouragingly.

"You mock yourself of me," he reproved her. "You say: 'He is the big liar.'"

"I never said such a thing in my life," Haroldine answered with some indignation.

They crossed the street and she slipped her arm into his with a pleasurable quiver.

"It's nice being with you," she said, looking up at him. "You see, we've been travelling for months now, and I haven't had a single soul but my aunt I could talk to. And a few maids in hotels. You see, my aunt says it isn't proper to talk to strangers. But you"—she glanced up at him—"don't seem the least bit like a stranger."

"I am a friend, yes?" he asked.

"Oh, yes." She gazed up at him earnestly. "Don't you think friendship is a wonderful thing? Sweethearts are gushy and you never feel quite sure of each other, but a friend, a true friend, whom you can tell every tiny trouble to—" She ended with a little burst of exaltation. "Emerson, you know," she added, "said 'What is so great as Friendship?'"

But he couldn't have been listening, for he was looking into the window of a bakery.

"Those cakes," he asked eagerly, "you like?"

"Which ones?" she demanded. "The puffy pink ones?"

He nodded.

"Oh, aren't they spiffing!" she exclaimed. "Let's go in and buy them!" And forgetting she was eighteen, she danced before him into the shop.

III

When they came out she was eating a meringue defiantly, and with as much mess as possible. She was eating it in a way she knew would horrify her aunt. The cream oozed out and dripped to the pavement. To an exultant Haroldine the cake was a symbol of emancipation. With one hand slipped through her artist's arm and the other grasping the meringue, she almost hoped she should meet her aunt. The oozing triumph, she felt, would be able to exorcize legions of self-suppressed aunts.

"Isn't it nice and smeary?" she laughed.

"Have you the need of my handkerchief?" he demanded, a little apprehensively.

She felt that he did not sympathize fully with her experiment in indecorum.

They drifted through lanes that flowed with tourists; lanes bordered with postcards, wooden bears, carved crucifixes, carved hatracks, cuckoo clocks and affectionate, vast, maternal dogs nursing wooden progenies. Finally they sat down on a bench. He lit a cigarette. Haroldine watched the operation with the eager eyes of a squirrel.

"Oh, may I have one?" she asked.

"But certainly." He passed her the box. Almost reverently she took a cigarette. To her it seemed the slender embodiment of an immense wickedness. She put it away in her bag.

"I'll smoke it when I'm alone," she said.

They were still for a time.

"Do you know," she confided, evoking old memories, "ever since I was a tiny child I've wanted to paint. It must be glorious! Sometimes I've seen

sunsets that were simply thrilling and I've said to myself, 'Just because there isn't a single soul here who can paint this it's going to be lost for ever and ever.'" Then her trend of thought changed. "How much do you get for a picture?" she demanded suddenly.

He made a grimace.

"I do not get," he said.

"But won't anyone buy your pictures?"

"They do not like them."

Haroldine experienced an uprush of sympathy.

"How detestable people are!" she exclaimed. "I wrote a poem once—and my aunt didn't like it. But Shakespeare wasn't appreciated until after he had died, was he?"

"No," he said sadly, "the genius, it is too elevated."

"Would—would you paint me?" Her eyes met his with earnestness.

"Mademoiselle, if you had demanded that a year ago I would have been mos' enchanted to paint you of anything else in the world. For if you permit it to me to say, mademoiselle, you are—delicious!" Gallantly he raised her fingers to his lips. Haroldine was startled.

"How f-funny—!" she spluttered. "I've never had anyone do that to me before. Do it again!" she pleaded.

He repeated the caress with a puzzled air. She laughed.

"Your moustache feels so fuzzy and scratchy," she said. "In America the men don't kiss our hands, you know."

"But your lover—he never kiss your han'?"

"I haven't—" Haroldine began and then stopped short. It would never do to admit she had never had a lover.

"I mean he doesn't kiss my hand," she explained, "but sometimes I let him kiss the tip of my ear." She said this with the air of an inspiration. For she had remembered the closing words of a novel: "And bending over her tenderly, he kissed the tip of her shell-like ear."

"But the mouth," the artist demanded. "He never kiss you on the mouth?"

"No," said Haroldine, inventing rapidly, "he says it's unsanitary."

He looked puzzled.

"Unsan—? I do not understand."

"Oh, I'm so glad," she laughed, "because it was only silly. Do let's talk about something else."

Neither spoke for a time. Haroldine bored into the gravel with the toe of her shoe and wished she had had lovers. The want of them gave her a physical sensation of coldness. Other girls of her age had lovers and went about being thought interesting. Her past life now seemed a dreary retrospect of lost opportunities for flirtation. A faint colour brightened her cheeks; abruptly she dug her heel into the gravel to emphasize a sudden resolution. She turned to the artist.

"You may kiss me," she said.

He stared at her, a little taken aback.

"You are not angry with me?" he asked.

"No," she sighed. "No—just with life. Do you know those immortal lines of Shakespeare: 'Fie, 'tis an unweeded garden—' I've forgotten the rest. Anyway, I can understand people's committing suicide, can't you? And don't kiss me after all," she added despondently.

Then she felt his fingers closing over her hand gently. She was so in need of sympathy that she didn't mind. Presently he began to stroke her cheek. She wondered if she ought to stop him, but she let him go on, though it tickled a little. He stopped after a while, though he still kept her hand in his. She said nothing and gazed out at a range of mountains.

It was nice, she thought, having him hold her hand. How much he must know about life and love! It made her feel absurdly young, gave her an empty, undeveloped feeling. . . . She thought of the pleasantness of sophistication and presently she spoke, looking down at the gravel:

"Have you—have you a wicked book? I've always wanted to read one." She blushed faintly. "But I never could seem to get hold of one,"

she continued. "Haven't you one you could lend me? I wouldn't get it dirty and I'd send it back from Interlaken by parcel post."

"My books," he said sadly, "are—how you say?—in hock."

"What a pity," she exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so tired of reading the things in the hotels: guide books and *Daily Mails*, and Bibles, and Paris-New York *Heralds* and records of Swiss Alpine Clubs. Have you ever read a record of a Swiss Alpine Club?" she demanded.

He shook his head.

"Stacks upon stacks upon stacks of books," she went on, "and not a single wicked one among them. I've looked."

Her voice ended on a despondent note.

"But why you so sad?" he asked. "Nothing to do all day but sit on a nice big chair."

"Oh, but I am though," she assured him.

"You poor thing," he comforted. "You *very* unhappy?"

"Unhappy?" Haroldine echoed, as a gush of recollections rose in her. "Oh, most awfully! I get up in the morning and aunty says: 'Now we're going to have our French lesson,' and I simply can't learn the verbs and I end by crying and then it's time for lunch, and after lunch aunty says: 'Now we're going to take our walk,' and we take it. And then it's time for supper, and after supper aunty knits and I read *Punch* or something, and then I write to my best girl friend, and I get so sad asking her about the dances at home I want to cry again, but there are so many people around I have to go upstairs to do it."

She paused to draw a deep breath.

"Oh," she broke out passionately, "I hate hotels and I hate Lucerne and I hate my aunt—yes, I *hate* her!" she ended savagely, with blazing eyes. "The only thing I don't hate," she added, "is you."

He kissed her then, but she was almost too disturbed to notice it. Afterwards she was amazed at her indifference to this epochal event of a first kiss.

"I, too," he said, "am ver' sad."

She looked surprised.

"You?" she asked. "Why, I thought you were the happiest—"

"I was," he answered. "But not now."

"Then we're sad together, aren't we?" she said sympathetically. "Please do tell me about yours."

She knew he must be setting his teeth hard, for the muscles in his cheeks swelled. He looked down at the gravel for a moment.

"I do not—" he began. "I no longer— Oh, but I cannot tell," he ended. "You would have the *mépris* for me, you would despise—. I make the pictures, I make them and I make them, but no one buy, I go hungry, I starve and now"—he waved deprecatingly—"I am no longer hungry. I make the money. But I am sad. *Voilà!*"

"But aren't you going to tell me?" Haroldine asked.

"Oh, *non*," he said, and shook himself as if seeking freedom from an idea.

Haroldine patted his hand.

"Please do cheer up," she said. "We might—we might go and have some more cakes, and I will pay for them."

But he only shrugged his shoulders moodily.

"I have not the hunger," he said.

But he, too, must have been considering remedies for depression, for at length he asked:

"You like the roulette?"

"Gambling?" she demanded.

He nodded.

She revived at the idea.

"I never have gambled in my life, but I'd adore to," she said. "Come on, let's do!"

He led the way to the Casino.

As she entered the gambling-room she saw a great many people gathered about a low, very long table covered with green baize. Near the centre of this table stood a short, sleek man who was in the act of tossing an ivory ball round the ledge of a revolving roulette wheel. As the wheel came to a stop

there was a moment of tension broken by the croupier's voice: "*Vingt-sept, rouge, impair et passe!*" There followed the clink of coin as the winners were paid and the francs on the losing numbers raked in. Haroldine's eyes sparkled.

"What fun!" she exclaimed.

"It is here," her companion said sadly, "I lose thirty, forty francs."

They approached the table.

"Do please tell me how to bet," Haroldine begged.

With the air of a pontiff of Fortune he advised her to stake a franc on the red. She did so, feeling the excitement of a great viciousness. It was all just like the gambling scene in the last novel she had read. Here were the same long tables, the same tenseness. Here she might win or lose a fortune. Then she remembered she had only four francs.

"*Messieurs, faites vos jeux*," the croupier was intoning in a thick, velvet voice. He closed the stakes by adding: "*Rien ne va plus*," and there was silence.

The roulette wheel was revolving very slowly now. Haroldine watched it with every muscle in her body rigid. "Come *red*, come *red*, come *red!*" she breathed. The ball rolled from a red socket into a black one. She grew limp with disappointment. But then it rose to the lip of the socket, hung balanced for a thrilling instant and dropped into the red. She was startled to see the people about her look at her and smile. Then she realized that she had squeaked. It was hard to be eighteen in spite of one's fiercest resolution.

"I never was so excited!" she told her admirer. "Let's bet again!"

When they left the Casino Haroldine had won ten francs. Reluctantly she went down the steps into the street.

"Why," she asked, "did they drag me away just when I was winning?"

"If you rest there," he said sagaciously, "you lose. I know. I lose forty francs."

It was late afternoon now; the sunshine had thinned.

"We go together somewhere now, yes?" he suggested.

"Yes—no. I don't know," said Haroldine. She was beginning to feel remorseful. She wondered where her aunt was and if she were much worried.

Suddenly she saw her. She was walking down the quai at a pace Haroldine had never imagined her capable of. She looked, Haroldine thought, like a black, hurrying, very pathetic mouse. As Miss Fry passed under a street lamp it was startling to see how terrified her expression was.

"We go together—" the artist began again.

Haroldine drew a sharp breath. She stepped behind a tree so that Miss Fry couldn't see her.

"It's my aunt," she interrupted.

He looked puzzled.

"I'm most awfully sorry," she said, "and I've had a perfect marvel of a time, but I—I have to go back to my aunt."

"*Please* come! Come with me—" he began. She shook her head. Abruptly she thrust her purse into his hand.

"Do take it," she begged. "Instead of me, I mean. And paint a picture."

His fingers closed on it automatically, but when he found it in his hand his face underwent an extraordinary change. First he looked blank and then furious.

"No," he burst out, "you do not understan'! Please take! Please take! Oh, my God, that is the *one* thing I hate the worst! *Please* take!"

But she heard him only faintly, for she was walking toward Miss Fry.

IV

THAT evening, as Haroldine was dressing for dinner in her new room at the Hotel Grand, she planned a letter to her best girl friend. She tried to think of appropriate words in which to describe her artist. Her mind just bordered on the correct phrase for him. As she was entering the dining-room with her aunt she found it: My Hero.

That was it; he was her hero. No other man had such eyes and could stand so slender and tall and look down so romantically.

"My hero!" she whispered to herself, and at the words her eyes had a full feeling as though they might shed tears. She entered the dining-room.

"Mademoiselle have lose something?"

She turned. It was the head waiter and he was holding out her purse—the same purse she had given her artist! For a moment she was lost in wonder; how could it be in his possession? Then she stared. For over the white expanse of the head waiter's shirtfront she recognized—her artist! Mechanically she took the purse. She was so surprised that she had followed her aunt half-way to their table before a flush of shame reached her cheeks.

"And I called him my hero!" she said to herself. "A head waiter!" She burned at the thought. "Oh, I might have known! How disgustingly *oily* he looks in that dress suit!"

She lost herself in a labyrinth of humiliating recollections and remembered where she was only when her aunt called upon her to choose between consommé and mock-turtle soup.

"I won't have any soup," she said at length, sadly.

Her aunt straightened with surprise. "Haroldine, this is the first time you've not been hungry. Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm well," said Haroldine, "but just —not hungry."

Furtively she opened her bag and under cover of the table-cloth threw his cigarette on the floor.

"My hero!" she breathed. "Oh!"

And with her heel she ground the cigarette to indistinguishable shreds.

PREFERENCE

By James Tracy

I

"*QUE m'aime, aime mon chien!*"

II

There were glittering diamonds in her hair, lustrous pearls about her neck, translucent emeralds on her fingers, cloth of gold about her body, and slippers studded with rubies on her feet.

Her face. . . .

I preferred her dog.

THE way to a woman's heart lies through your pocket book.

VAGARIES

By June Gibson

I

SHE was invariably drunk.

She smoked incessantly, and was addicted to a drug.

She had a lover.

She called her maids vile names, and beat her little children.

She murdered her husband. . . .

Her name was Lily.

II

A LITTLE child played on the shore.

He saw an oyster clinging to a rock, and reached for it with a stick.

As he was about to pull it toward him a piece of glass shining in the sunlight attracted his attention.

As he ran toward the glass a wave washed the oyster from the rock. . . .

In the oyster was a priceless pearl.

III

HE was wizened and anæmic, and had thin hair.

No one asked his advice or respected his opinion or sought his company.

Women avoided him.

He earned eight dollars a week.

One night he imbibed fourteen cocktails. . . .

A beautiful woman loved him because he was clever.

IV

THE palms were inviting.

All evening many beautiful women had sought him, and he was weary.

He came upon a young girl.

He thought she was very lovely.

Her face was as smooth as a white pansy petal and her eyes were as dark as late dusk.

He sat beside her.

For a long time they were silent, watching the dancers through the palms.

When the music ceased she slipped away. . . .

In the kitchen she said to one of the other maids:

"Me and a swell waiter was watching the dancers."

A MAN kissing a woman proves nothing. Likewise, a woman kissing a man proves nothing. But it arouses suspicion.

CRÊPE DE CHINE

By James Stephens

THE thing came on her like a thunderbolt, and indeed while she was submitting to destiny the phrase "like a bolt from the blue" did detach itself for an instant in her consciousness, but it was fallen upon and buried by the avalanche of emotions and angers and plannings which her mind was trying so vainly to deal with.

She had gone, it was a custom of hers on sunny afternoons, into the Saint Stephen's Green Park and had walked a little, and sat a little, and looked for a while at the flowers and at the ducks swimming, each with a tiny brood bobbing lightly in its wake; and at a seagull that swooped and slanted to touch the water with the tip of its bill, and then, without a pause, slid widely sideways, and up easily again, and away on adventures never to be recorded.

Her purpose was to go down Grafton Street to a shop, in the window of which, too late for action on the previous evening, she had seen a blouse marked at a price which she believed must be a mistake or a shop trick. She foresaw there would be trouble in the shop when she asked for it at the price marked on the ticket, and that the salespeople would say the blouse was too small for her, and would try to make her take another of the same kind at three times the price. But she meant to give battle, and was determined not to leave the shop without the identical blouse, whether it fitted her or whether it did not.

She was in the Green to prepare herself for this battle, for by gazing on tranquil water we gain something of its tranquillity, and the untroubled serenity of flowers and blue skies would give her the serenity of mind which could break even the will of a drapery salesman.

If, she thought, they send me a saleswoman I shall have a hard fight, but if they send me a man I may win without much trouble, for men get tired easily. Also, she thought, men cannot fight well when they know they are in the wrong, but women fight as well for the wrong as for the right. The man will know that the figure marked on the blouse is an advertising trick designed to entice people into the shop, and when I accuse him of that he will give in where a woman would not.

The influence of the peaceful, sunny place had done its work, and feeling braced and tranquil she arose from the iron seat and turned up the alley by the lake towards the Grafton Street exit. When she stood she looked across the pond and noticed that two friends of hers were seated in the shade of a small tree, and the thought came to her that she would tell them of her errand. She might even ask them to accompany her, for in a shop all discussion closes when several voices are raised in protest.

She went across the steep little bridge and bore down on her friends. They did not notice her approach, and she thought smilingly: "When women so lose themselves in talk they are either talking scandal or dress." And she halted a moment so that she might not come on them too abruptly. The short, bushy tree was between them, and on this side of the tree also there was a seat.

The instant she halted she heard her own name mentioned, and knew that

she was the subject of the scandal, if scandal it was. She smiled shyly, slipped into the seat on her side of the tree, and listened to the talk of her friends.

In a few seconds she was no longer smiling, and where she had been listening carelessly she now listened with her whole being.

"How did he come to marry her?" said one voice.

"He didn't marry her, my dear," the other voice replied, "she married him."

"She must be at least ten years older than he is."

"Yes, at least, and I'm sure he knows it by this."

"Do they get on together, do you think?"

"One never knows, but I would say they do not. They snap a good deal at each other, and even when he does not snap he seems always impatient when she is speaking."

"Well, she has a strident voice."

"She never talks, she yells, and he is one of those strung-up people who get shivers when— Do you know what I think?"

"What do you think?"

"I think that some day or other he will run away from her."

"I don't think he will do that. I don't think he is the kind . . . of man—"

"I do. I think he is exactly the kind of man. If they had children he is the kind of man who would never leave his children: but they have none, and that is the only thing which could hold him to her. Think of the way she yells in a room or in a restaurant, and how quiet he is. Every movement of hers must seem to him like the worst kind of vulgarity. And she is vulgar, look at the way she dresses. She is always a fright. If she has the right skirt she has the wrong boots, and when her blouse is right, her hat is wrong. She hasn't got a particle of taste, the poor thing."

"She has no taste in dress, that is true, but—"

"She has no taste in anything, and she draws attention to herself always, always. He must hate to be with her."

"Men don't see these things."

"Don't they, my dear! Don't they! That type of man notices everything. I've seen him looking at her when he didn't know anyone was looking at him. Oh! I'm no fool, and I tell you this, that I'll bet you anything he'll run away from her."

"Oh, now, she is not so bad as you say."

"Not for us, but for him she is worse than anything we could say. He hates her, and if he doesn't run away from her before the year is out I—I'll never believe in my own judgment again."

"If only she had a child, the poor thing!"

"She hasn't one, and she'll never have one, you and I know that."

Listening to them, she grew livid with rage. She rose to her feet, stepped carefully to the grass, and walked away.

These were her friends!

These gabby monsters who kissed her every time they met and kissed her every time they parted! And they were always meeting. She went to tea in their houses; they came to tea in hers. Oh! They would not take tea together again. Never again would either of these women put a foot inside her door. That was one thing gained from it all. She knew her enemies now. She was warned at least. Ah, but she would meet them. She would meet them once more and she would cut them to the bone. Now she knew the run of their tongues, but they did not know hers yet. Her husband did, and they would, too. Her husband! He was to run away from her! Well, she would see about that, too. That man! Man! He was more like a snail than a man. And he was to run away from her! She would like to see him run. Indeed, if there was a run in him she would make him run. And he wasn't pleased with her ways. He looked at her, it seemed, when he thought no one observed him, and looked at her as if

he hated her. One of these days he might have cause to hate her. A stuck-up prig that thought no one was to open their lips except himself. And he had to have two clean collars every day. And no one but himself was under any circumstances to go into his study. And no one was to open their mouths while his mouth was open. And he wanted a bedroom all to himself. And he wanted his meals at regular hours. And he wanted to go out whenever he liked and come in at all hours. And he wanted his clothes properly brushed. Well! All those things would be seen to, and he would learn that he wasn't a gay bachelor any longer. She would teach him that he had a wife, and that she had her rights, and that she would have her rights.

As she walked her brain was reeling with rage and spite. She would joyfully have learned that her two friends were dead: that they had been crushed by a tram or that a roof had fallen in on them. Less than that they did not deserve, but for her husband no catastrophe could be enormous enough, no torment sufficiently harrowing: no death or disaster of which she could think would be adequate to that man's perfidy. Man! and away her mind went again denouncing and sneering and threatening.

She forgot all about the blouse which was marked vastly below its proper price in the Grafton Street window; she forgot about her two friends and what they had said of her under the tree in the Park: she forgot about the street and the people in the street whom she jostled and pushed aside without raising an eye to them: she remembered only that there was someone whom she could make pay for all this: someone who she would make pay, and she was hastening towards him to make him pay.

The evening was advanced, and although the sun was still shining, it was shining with a difference. That limpid clarity of the morning was gone: the strong white glare of afternoon had changed: here was now a dust of gold, the first veil of those innumerable veilings which the evening does not cease to spread until her obscurity is complete, and life is hushed, and all the eyes that were open close in quietness.

Under this tender radiance she walked home and untouched by it, touched only by the lowest passions of her being she reached home.

The maid who opened the door said, in reply to her question, that the master was not in yet: and she remembered that at that hour he always went for a walk. "He has been out a long time to-day," said the maid.

She went upstairs and took off her hat.

Reminders of her husband were visible everywhere through the house. Here was one of his waistcoats; there was a cigar case; yonder a pair of his slippers, and the sight of them set her off again. . . . "And he must have a separate bedroom, and he must have this, and he must have that, and no one else is to have anything. And no one is to say a word until he has finished speaking. And no one is to go into his study. . . ."

She arose and marched resolutely downstairs and into his study. She sat down, looking about the room with a feeling of dislike that was almost hatred even for the room. A sheet of paper was lying on the table, and she drew it idly towards her. It was written upon. She read it. It was a short note saying he could no longer live with her and giving the address of his solicitors, who would regulate their affairs and make all the necessary arrangements. It said that under no circumstances would he ever return to her.

As she read the blood ebbed at one stroke from her cheeks, and at a stroke rushed blindingly back again, and her hand that held the paper began to tremble violently.

THE CYCLE

By T. F. Mitchell

MY youth was spent in the world of pleasure: a world of rosy highlights, a riot of sparkling wine, pretty women and rollicking song, permeated with the bluish haze of cigarette smoke.

I married and settled down to the staid respectable life of convention. When I was fifty, my wife died.

Left to my own devices again, I came by accident on a new world, one which charmed me with its novelty; a world of rosy highlights, a riot of sparkling wine, pretty women and rollicking song, permeated with the bluish haze of cigarette smoke.

I HAVE MADE TWO SONGS FOR YOU

By Harold Crawford Stearns

I HAVE made two songs for you:
One for heaven and one for hell,
One that you can tell to few,
One that you can never tell.

I have planned them all these years . . .
Out of star-dust one was made,
And the other, dull with tears,
Out of twilight and blue shade.

I have made two songs for you:
One for giving, one to hold;
Sing the first, as youth must do,
Hug the last when you are old.

IT is dangerous for a man to have been made happy by too many women: it makes him bitter against them.

THE AVENGING YEARS

By John C. Cavendish

I

I SAW a real antique in his mouldy basement shop—a copy of a Koran translated into French by the Sieur de Ryer, and printed over two hundred years ago—and I went down to purchase it. In this way I made his acquaintance. At first he talked to me standing up among his disorderly books, with sometimes a smudge of ancient dust across his face, like a streak of sable war-paint. Later, because I listened to him silently and well, he took me behind the books and gave me a chair at a dirty little table. There we sat, in a perpetual twilight like that of a dying world, and he poured into my ears the opinions he most cherished, and at last one day he began the strange and fervid story of his life.

He was very old; he was shrunken like withered fruit. Each day he must have consumed prodigious quantities of tea, for he never talked without the accompaniment of a freshly brewed pot, brought into us steaming, the aromatic vapours drifting from the spout like the smoke of incense from a censer.

The beverage was served to us by an incredibly old woman, monstrous in the crooked deformity into which the years had shaped her. Her face was lined with sardonic furrows; it was an evil countenance with an effect of malevolence heightened by her physical impotence. Yet when the old man spoke to her she trembled and fear came over the evil of her face, like an obliterating shadow. He was strikingly harsh to her; when he commanded her his voice rose in pitch until, although his utterance was never really loud, he seemed to scream. She at no time remained with us save during the seconds when some service was required of her, after which she disappeared through a low door into the uncertain gloom of a room beyond, like a troll-woman seeking her cave.

I knew the old man many months before he began to tell me the passional history of his earlier years. He never made of this a connected story, but related his tale day by day in colourful patches, leaving their synthesis to me. Now and then he would get up and disappear around the dim shelves to attend a customer. Then I would hear his uneven step as he came back and see him re-appear among his books; the incongruous story would be resumed—incongruous because it was a tale of emotion, the warm blood of young years spoken from the bleached lips of an ancient dealer in antiques.

II

UNTIL his father died, and Bradley was then twenty-seven years old, he was entirely dominated by his parent. In his nature there was something unresistent, and Bradley, senior, never really aware of his son's temperament, forced him into uncongenial pursuits.

Young Bradley was engaged in business until nearly thirty. His father considered him a boy of very mediocre talents; so far as this judgment applied to his commercial ability, it was true. When old Bradley died his son never appeared another day at the office.

For years he had cherished an affection for books, for paintings, and for

the atmosphere in which these things were produced. He had indulged many vague dreams of a life in quarters of lax convention, with an acquaintance among charming and temperametal people. He knew no such people, and his notion of their way of living was a blend of truth and inaccuracy achieved by his credence of gossip, his reading and his imagination. Now, with his freedom, he sought to enter into such a life.

He chose two rooms in an old house, one of those tall old houses that, with the neighbourhoods in which they stand, have passed from the usage of polite people to the harbouring of eccentrics. Bradley lived on the third floor at the back, and in front, at the end of the corridor, two other rooms were occupied by an artist and a young girl.

He saw her first down the length of the hall, standing in the open door. She was posed in profile, and her lips moved as she spoke to the man in the room. A window that gave her a background touched the edges of her person with light. Otherwise, she was largely in shadow; her effect was that of a silhouette rimmed with white, even flame. She leaned a little forward, her aspect appeared, for the moment, curiously two dimensional.

Bradley made a sound in the hall and she turned her head quickly. She saw him, and with a swift movement closed the door of her room. Bradley walked to the stairs and descended in semi-darkness.

He had found in the figure of her, posed a second in the doorway, that subtle suggestion of unconventionality so agreeable to him. He desired to know her. That wish was not difficult to gratify, for he made the acquaintance of the artist a few days later, and was invited to his room. He learned also that to the artist the girl stood in the relation of daughter.

One evening he knocked on the door at the end of the hall and a voice told him to come in. This he did, and found three people in the room. The artist, a big blond chap, was stretched out in a large chair drawn close to a very disorderly table. Near him sat a woman, blonde also, quite plump, with somewhat startling brown eyes. The girl in whom Bradley found his interest was curled like an ungraceful cat in a chair on the other side of the room. The artist got up and shook Bradley's hand.

"Glad you came in," he said. "Sit down anywhere." He inclined his head toward the blonde woman.

"Know Miss Justin," he said.

"Hello," said Miss Justin, and she waved her hand to him, but did not move.

"And this is Geraldine," concluded his host, pointing to his daughter.

Bradley bowed; Geraldine made no acknowledgment.

The artist went back to his chair, and the blonde woman resumed a gossiping conversation with him that she had evidently broken off on Bradley's knock.

Bradley, a little disconcerted, stood near the door for an uncertain moment, and then, under the stress of his desire, crossed the room to the girl curled up on a chair. He pulled another chair near her and sat down.

"I want to talk to you," he said. "May I?"

"Of course you may," she said.

He made his first, intimate scrutiny of her. Her clothes were untidy, and here and there spotted; they were, it seemed to him, almost purposely and aggressively without neatness. Her hair was black and heaped up on her head carelessly, as if tossed there. Bradley looked at her face, and he saw first her full, blue eyes, cold, and beautiful, he thought. Her nose was large, aggressive, somewhat curved, and the nostrils thin and nervous. She had a full-lipped mouth, a little sullen in repose.

"I came in here to see you," Bradley told her.

She showed no surprise; she frowned a little.

"I know you did. I felt that. Why? I'm not a pleasant person nor an interesting person, and I'm not particularly struck with you.

"You're terribly frank!"

"Why shouldn't I be?"

It would have been a difficult question for Bradley to answer; his conversation with Geraldine seemed to have come to a stalemate, but he was rescued from any embarrassment by the artist, who hurled a query at him across the room.

"I say, Bradley," he called. "What do you think about this?"

He pointed to plump Miss Justin, who was smiling a little fatuously.

"Ruth here is a great reformer; she has a lot of helpful ideas about the uplift of the common man. What do you think?"

"Well . . . just what do you mean?"

"I think," said the artist, "that the uplift only discourages the extraordinary man and makes the sum total of the forces of mediocrity too strong for him. It doesn't elevate the common man—it simply destroys the superman."

"Perhaps—"

Bradley was drawn into the discussion.

Geraldine took no part in it and when Bradley turned to her again she was resting her face in her hands, staring moodily at the floor, with something ferine in her tousled appearance, so that he thought she suggested a morose goddess, fallen from her Pegana.

"And what do you think?" he asked her.

"I don't think anything about it," she said. "Dad likes to talk and he takes up some silly thing *she* says and treats it seriously—as if she really had a thought!"

Angrily she looked at him with her blue, clear eyes. Her emotions were exhibited with the *naïveté* of a child; to Bradley her frankness was strongly attractive; she glossed none of her inner feelings with a conventional veneer. He considered her mysterious. His sense of a mystery in her gave her a potent charm; her frankness became a veil of concealment; he was eager to understand her. He watched her face and thought her beautiful.

III

In the course of the next few weeks Bradley learned considerably about the artist and his daughter Geraldine. That relationship appeared to be authentic. But Geraldine's mother was unmentioned; Geraldine had never known anything about her.

During this period, in the half dozen times Bradley dropped into the room at the end of the hall, he usually saw the Justin woman. He was not then sure of her status. She seemed to him a rather colourlessly good-humoured woman with a certain physical charm achieved by her voluptuous contours. Geraldine's father treated her with a half-humorous, half-tender deference. But Geraldine exhibited a scorn softened by no effort at concealment.

The reason of her dislike was not quite clear to Bradley until the day when he found her there alone, in passionate tears.

He had invited her out to dinner with him. Before the appointed time he was dressed and waiting impatiently. With the nervousness of an amateur performer waiting for his entrance-cue, he walked up and down the room, glancing now and again into his mirror. He wondered what they might talk about, how Geraldine would deport herself, whether she would maintain the bitter demeanour he had always found her characteristic. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was time to call. Opening the door, he stepped out into the corridor.

He walked to her door and tapped. He heard a movement in the room, but no voice called out to him. He knocked again.

"Come!"

It was her voice.

He went in. She was standing with her back to the window. He had expected to see her dressed to go out, but she was in *negligée*. The latter hung limply from her shoulders like a cerement, and looking at her face he was amazed to find her eyes red. Her hair was unspeakably tousled as if she had

been running her fingers through it persistently, and downward from her eyes ran red lines, like welts from a cat-o'-nine-tails, the seared courses of tears.

"I can't go!" she said.

Bradley was astonished. He stood in front of her stupidly, unable to say anything.

"I tell you I can't go out!" she repeated.

"But what is the matter?" he faltered at last.

She remained motionless a moment, looking at him in the frozen manner with which she had first greeted him. Her face was almost without expression, and pale, save for the red marks burned there by her tears.

"My father has gone again," she said.

"What?"

Bradley was too surprised to be intuitional.

She explained in a cold voice, curiously repressed, that by the incongruity of its icy impersonality brought out startlingly the tragic import of the words she spoke.

"My father has gone again. You don't understand, do you? He goes, from time to time, and leaves me. This time it's with that woman you've seen here—the Justin woman. I don't know where he's gone and I won't know until he's ready to come back. Then he'll search for me again."

She stopped speaking; her eyes remained on Bradley's face.

"But . . . but what are you going to do?"

"Do! What have I done before? Anything I can get to do! You don't suppose he leaves me any money, do you?"

She stared at Bradley a moment longer and he returned her stare. His mind seemed quite incapable of any adequate thought. He was silent. Geraldine was silent; neither moved. He had a curious sensation of enchantment; it seemed to him that he and Geraldine would ceaselessly maintain this tableau, an unrelieved nightmare. His surprise had, in a sense, drugged his mind.

Geraldine had willed the utmost repression of her emotions. Her frigid posturing was accomplished at the expenditure of an immense mental effort. But she felt her first fury, the flaming, extravagant anger she had gripped and controlled on Bradley's approach, seething in her blood. She struggled a moment; she still stared at Bradley with a face from which all expression had been frozen. And then, like hot collected vapours capable of no further repression, she exploded.

Bradley was enchained in the stupefaction of his first surprise. He was wholly unprepared for her demonstration. In the first moment of her extravagance he was without motion.

She made a grimace. Like an enraged cat she whirled half a circle, noiselessly. She was standing close to the table at which her father customarily sat. A half a dozen of his sketches were scattered over its top. These chromatic daubs stuck here and there among a vast disorder of papers, books, odds and ends of clothing. The table was covered by a kid pelt.

She seized one of the corners and pulled the skin from the varnished top. A swirl of paper and books cascaded to the floor like a suddenly loosed chaos. With a distorted countenance, she scattered them with her feet, she trampled on them, she beat and ripped them with her slippers, like a furious deity treading out sin. In the midst of her destructive rage her eyes were captured by an object at the other side of the room. It was an easel on which rested a half-finished portrait.

She ran across the room precipitously, almost seemed to achieve the movement from one place to the other in a single infuriated step. She thrust her fist at the canvas; it resisted her blows. She turned, seized a slender straight-backed chair and hurled it at the picture. The canvas was pierced, the whole apparatus fell to the floor with an explosive clatter, and Geraldine sank down into the ruins in an hysteria of weeping.

A singular thrill had come upon Bradley. The exuberant rage to which he had been witness stirred him, moved him intensely, produced in him a sense of exultation. An admiration for the passion of the girl on the floor glowed in his heart. He looked down and saw the tense vitality of her convulsive shoulders. She was desirable!

He crossed over to her, leaned down to her, put his hands on her arms.

"Don't!" he said.

She seemed not to hear him. He spoke to her again.

"What do you care where he's gone? I'm in love with you. I've been in love with you ever since I first saw you. Don't you hear me? I'm in love with you, Geraldine. I want you to marry me!"

She stopped weeping suddenly and turned her face to him. Once more it was masked with an icy repression. The flush of her fury had dropped into pallor. On the white of her face the marks of her tears stained the skin with carmine splotches.

"What . . . what do you mean?" she asked.

"Don't you understand?" Bradley repeated. "I want you to marry me. I want you for my wife. I'm in love with you."

She stood up; she still looked at him; she seemed to search his face. Bradley was very close to her, repressing a desire to seize her and cover her face with kisses.

"I don't love you," she said slowly.

"I don't care!" he cried. "You will. I want you to marry me!"

"I'd never love you," she said. "Even if I did marry you. You don't want me!"

He could no longer restrain himself and he took her in his arms and kissed her damp face. It was in him now that the fury of passion burned; the girl in his arms was flexed, almost without life, pale, unresisting, as if the touch of his lips were a narcotic that brought a stupor to her limbs.

"You must marry me! You must!" he cried.

IV

She married Bradley and in his senses the fascination of her increased. For many weeks he dreamed of arousing her to a love for him. In the night, lying awake, he pictured a hundred moments of mutual ardour, invented dialogue, created whole scenes of the future. Yet she still received his kisses without response, coldly, as if numbed by his arms.

On their wedding trip they went to Florida. Later they crossed the keys and steamed to Havana. Sometimes, at strange sights, or the beauty of an ancient place, Geraldine's eyes widened, colour glowed in her cheeks, and her voice acquired a fervour. But never for Bradley.

At best she was indifferent to him. At worst she was antagonistic. Sometimes she was sullen, mute, unapproachable. Yet from her there passed to Bradley a subtle and insidious attraction, that made all of her moods a fascination.

His desire for response caused him an eagerness even for her anger. Then she was at least aroused emotionally, if not in the way he desired. Sometimes, in the midst of her anger, he would seize her and kiss her, and the faint perfume of her white skin maddened him.

They returned to New York and took an apartment. Geraldine was amused for a time by the collection of rugs, pictures, vases, pieces of tapestry, silk screens for their rooms, and Bradley, the serf of her allure, made her no denials. He visited all the theatres with her, all the cafés; she at last grew tired of these things.

She suggested a return to Bohemian quarters, and Bradley acquiesced.

"I want to see some of the old people again," she said. He consented and they stored some of their things, took others with them, and moved to a suite in the old studio quarter.

Geraldine planned a big party; it seemed she had more acquaintances than Bradley imagined. They deco-

rated the rooms in a bizarre scheme of black and white and Geraldine displayed almost a childish fervour in all the arrangements, in hiring of the musicians, the caterer, the selection of refreshments. Somewhat alarmed, Bradley paid the bills.

The night came and the guests arrived in costume. Their revelry was extravagant, and Bradley felt a little out of place. He had scarcely a moment with his wife all evening. She was captured by a tall, smiling fellow, with an almost Spanish cast of face, with whom she danced repeatedly. Bradley was finally introduced to him formally. His name was Crae. He was a composer of music.

This initiated a curious intimacy with which Bradley felt himself unable to cope. Crae called on Geraldine, they dined out together, they seemed quite oblivious of Bradley. Their relation was assumed with so much *naïveté* that he scarcely knew how to take hold of it. He wanted to expostulate, yet every method that occurred to him seemed clumsy. He was afraid of Geraldine's scorn.

So Bradley let things drift until one morning he found a note: Geraldine had gone.

At first he was stupefied. For several days he was unable to act, but remained in his rooms, mute, stunned, overwhelmed, as if he had been drugged. Then a spark of anger lighted in his stupefaction. A flame kindled and leapt up bright and Bradley burned with a resolve to seek out Geraldine and the composer of music who had taken her from him. He spent a day in angry resolves, in passionate visions of retribution, and thought of no plan. Later, considering everything, trying to discover a channel for personal action, he was finally forced to put his search in the hands of a detective agency. His hours passed in waiting.

The sleuths procured him no information and served no function save to collect charges; Bradley transferred the inquiry to another agency. Blessed with an astonishing inspiration, this second agency communicated with the composer's publishers and found that he had written them only a few days before, giving an address. This was still New York. The detectives went to the place he had named and found him with Geraldine. Over a month had passed since they had disappeared together. They had been in New York the entire time.

Bradley settled with his detective agency. He went to a pawn shop and bought a revolver and cartridges to fit it. He seemed now to act mechanically, to think no more, to follow only the dictates of an unseen genius, whispering to his brain.

The next morning he set out for the house where Geraldine was living with Crae.

Curiously numb, he mounted the steps and rang the bell. A maid came to the door.

"Is Mr. Crae in?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Is his . . . his wife?"

"I don't think she can see you now, sir. She's busy."

Bradley looked at the girl a moment. He had no plan ready for such an obstacle. She waited a second; he did not speak; she was about to close the door. With a growl like an animal, Bradley put his foot over the threshold. He pushed the girl aside, like a man brushing a spider's thread from his face. He ran into the hall and almost instinctively he climbed the stairs. When he was nearly at the top a woman stepped out of one of the rooms. It was Geraldine.

Her black hair was caught up loosely. She wore a peignoir of red silk, broidered over with gold flowers, and a strand of her hair touched the stuff at her shoulder with the effect of a sable trimming. She stared at Bradley a moment and walked back into the room. He swiftly followed her. She was waiting at the door; as he entered she closed it.

Bradley surveyed the room in a swift glance. It was strewn with clothing,

Near the window was a trunk, half packed. There was no sign of Crae.

"Where is he?" demanded Bradley.

"He's gone. . . ."

Geraldine answered him after a perceptible pause, as if she weighed whether or not she would speak. Her face was impersonal, emotionless, yet somehow potentially fervent, like a tragic mask with the lines of tragedy painted out.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he's gone. Our money ran out; he had no more; he's gone."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I haven't thought of anything."

No word to him of extenuation, of excuse, of explanation, but only a *naïveté*, or an indifference, that was almost dreadful! Bradley stared at her. She met his gaze with her blue eyes opened, her lips a little parted, her face pale, with just a glow of red over it reflected from the carmine peignoir.

And the spell of her returned to Bradley. He forgot his design of retribution, whatever it might have been. His senses thrilled to her nearness, like a string vibrant with sympathy. He stood before her only a moment longer and then, forgetful of all that was not of her supreme allure, he circled her with his arms and felt her midnight hair fall over his hands like a shower of strong silk, and he touched her lips again until the warmth of them destroyed all the chill that yet remained in his spirit. The faint perfume of her was again in his nostrils.

She received his lips, she made him no resistance—nor any response. He drew away a second and looked at her pale face, still faintly red by the colour thrown up from her dress. A flash of understanding, a moment of vision came to him. She was mysterious to him, she was infinitely desirable—and she would never love him! Yet, he saw himself, months and years in prospect, the slave of her allure, the subject of her caprice and cruelty, until at last the loss of that which he found beautiful in her would free him from her ineffable charm!

V

As I have said, the old man never told me a connected story. All that I have related is given by a synthesis of my own making. He was a poor story-teller. He diluted his interest with irrelevancies, he backed and filled, he made omissions. But nevertheless he contrived to get a fervour into his snatches of self-history and often his dried-up face expanded under my eyes until I saw the young man he had been, and his fervid love affair became authentic.

But at last he ceased to tell me of this, and the tale seemed quite incomplete to me. Several times I sat with him, drinking tea that exhaled a fresh aroma into the musty odours of his books, and waited for the end of his story. But it never came. At last I questioned him.

"But your wife—the woman . . . Geraldine? What happened to her?"

He looked at me a little surprised.

"Nothing," he said.

"But—"

He gazed at me a second and then elevated his brows like Punch.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "I thought you understood. You never connected—"

He paused, looked into his tea-cup and found it empty.

"Geraldine!" he bawled, with senile fury, for the first time using that name while I had been with him in that place. The witch came out of her cave; I looked at her; I understood.

The old man snarled at her and she went away with his cup.

I arose and shook his hand good-bye. The sense of pity in which I had held him was quite gone.

The years, that crumble beauty, had avenged him.

IT'S AN ANNOYING THING TO BE ABSENT-MINDED

By Charles S. Zerner

IT'S an annoying thing to be absent-minded. It has caused me a great deal of discomfort.

I once fell in love. Her name was Margaret. Margaret could only love a hero. She told me so. I had never figured conspicuously in any melodramatic event, and as a bookkeeper in the office of a shoe factory the future offered few opportunities for the manifestation of my courage. I therefore resolved to make my own.

I invited Margaret to go canoeing. It was a dark night, and when we reached a still darker spot on the lake, I suggested that we change seats. While doing so I managed to place the paddle between Margaret's feet and twist it so that she would lose her balance.

My plan worked. Margaret fell in the water with a fine splash and a wild shriek for help.

"Fear not, Margaret," I called in the best Shakespearian rhythm I could muster. "Remember, I am near you!" I cried, yanking off my coat and posing for the leap to rescue Margaret.

But an unusual thing occurred. I suddenly remembered that I couldn't swim.

It's an annoying thing to be absent-minded.

TRYST

By Margaret Widdemer

UPON a golden time before,
When evening would begin,
I would come laughing to your door,
And you would let me in:

O sleep you sound, dear heart and true,
Lest on some rain-tossed eve
My soul come sobbing back to you
And you should wake and grieve!

SOME LADIES AND JURGEN

By James Branch Cabell

I

IN the old days lived a poet named Jurgen; but what his wife called him was very often much worse than that. She was a high-spirited woman, with no especial gift for silence. Well, in the old days Jurgen was passing the Cistercian Abbey, and one of the monks had tripped over a stone in the roadway. He was cursing the devil who had placed it there.

"Fie, brother!" says Jurgen, "and have not the devils enough to bear as it is?"

"I never held with Origen," replied the monk; "and, besides, it hurt my great toe confoundedly."

"None the less," observes Jurgen, "it does not behoove God-fearing persons to speak with disrespect of the divinely appointed Prince of Darkness. Then, to your further confusion, consider this monarch's industry! Day and night you may detect him toiling at the task Heaven set him. That is a thing can be said of few communicants and of no monks. Think, too, of his fine artistry, as evinced in all the perilous and lovely snares of this world, which it is your business to combat, and mine to make verses about! Why, but for him we would both be vocationless. Then, moreover, consider his philanthropy! and deliberate how insufferable would be our case if you and I, and all of us, were to-day hobnobbing with all other beasts in the Garden which we pretend to desiderate on Sundays! To arise with swine and lie down with the hyena?—oh, intolerable!" So he ran on, devising reasons for not thinking too harshly of the devil. Most of it was an abridgement of his own verses.

"I consider that to be stuff and nonsense," was the monk's glose.

"No doubt your notion is sensible," observed the poet; "but mine is the prettier. . . ."

Well, and then Jurgen met a black gentleman, who saluted him, and said:

"Thanks, Jurgen, for your good word."

"Who are you, and why do you thank me?" asks Jurgen.

"My name is no great matter. But you have a kind heart, Jurgen. May your life be free from care!"

"Glory be to God, friend, but I am already married."

"Eh, sirs, and a fine, clever poet like you! No matter, the morning is brighter than the evening. How I will reward you, to be sure."

So Jurgen thanked him politely. And when Jurgen reached home his wife was nowhere to be seen. He looked on all sides and questioned everyone, but to no avail. So he crossed himself, prepared his own supper, went to bed, and slept soundly.

"I have implicit confidence," says he, "in Lisa. I have particular confidence in her ability to take care of herself, in any surroundings."

That was all very well: but time passed, and presently it began to be rumoured that Lisa walked on Morven. Her brother, who was a grocer and a member of the town council, went thither to see about this report. And sure enough, there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, sister!" says the town councillor, "this is very unseemly conduct

for a married woman, and a thing likely to be talked about."

"Follow me!" replied Dame Lisa. And the town councillor followed her a little way, in the dusk, but when she came to Amneran Heath and still went onward, he knew better than to follow.

Next evening the elder sister of Dame Lisa went to Morven. This sister had married a notary, and was a shrewd woman. In consequence she took with her this evening a long wand of peeled willow-wood. And there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, sister!" says the notary's wife, who was a shrewd woman, "and do you not know that all this while Jurgen does his own sewing, and is once more making eyes at the Countess Varvara?"

Dame Lisa shuddered; but she only said, "Follow me!"

So the notary's wife followed her to Amneran Heath, and across Amneran Heath to where a cave was. This was a place of abominable repute. . . . A lean hound came to them there in the twilight, lolling his tongue: but the notary's wife struck twice with her wand, and the silent beast left them. And Lisa went silently into the cave, and her sister turned and went home to her children, weeping.

So the next evening Jurgen himself came to Morven, because all his wife's family assured him this was the manly thing to do. He followed his wife across Amneran Heath until they reached the cave. The poet would willingly have been elsewhere. For the hound squatted upon his haunches, and seemed to grin at Jurgen; and there were other creatures abroad that flew low in the twilight, keeping close to the ground like owls; but they were larger than owls, and were more discomforting.

Jurgen said, a little peevishly:

"Lisa, my dear, if you go into the cave I will have to follow you, because it is the manly thing to do. And you know how easily I take cold."

The voice of Lisa was as the rustle of dead leaves.

"There is a cross about your neck. You must throw that away."

And indeed, Jurgen was wearing such a cross, through motives of sentiment, because it had once belonged to his dead mother.

But now, to pleasure his wife—"I am embarking upon an apologue," was his appraisal—he removed the trinket, and hung it on a barberry bush; and with the reflection that this was likely to prove a deplorable business, he followed Lisa into the cave.

Well, all was dark there, and Jurgen could see no one. But the cave stretched straight forward, and downward, and at the far end was a glow of light.

So Jurgen went on and on, and, after divers happenings which do not here concern us, he came to a notable place where seven cresset lights were burning. These lights were the power of Assyria, and Babylon, and Nineveh, and Egypt, and Rome, and Athens, and Byzantium: and six other cressets stood ready there, but fire had not yet been laid to these. And here was the black gentleman, in a black dressing-gown that was embroidered with all the signs of the Zodiac. He sat at a table, the top of which was curiously inlaid with thirty pieces of silver: and he was copying entries from one big book into another.

"You find me busy with my accounts," says he, "which augment daily—but what more can I do for you, Jurgen?"

"I have been thinking, Prince—" begins the poet.

"And why do you call me a prince, Jurgen?"

"I do not know, sir. But I suspect you are Koschei the Deathless."

The black gentleman nodded. "Something of the sort. Koschei, or Norka, or Chudo-Yudo—it is all one what I may be called hereabouts. My real name you never heard: no man has ever heard my name. So that matter we need hardly go into."

"Precisely, Prince. And I have been thinking that my wife's society is per-

haps becoming a trifle burdensome to you."

"Eh, sirs, I cannot report that I enjoy it. But I am not unaccustomed to women. I may truthfully say that as I find them, so do I take them. And I was willing to oblige a fellow rebel."

"But I do not know, Prince, that I have ever rebelled—"

"You make verses, Jurgen. And all poetry is man's rebellion against being what the creature unluckily is."

"Well, be that as it may, Prince! But I do not know that you have obliged me."

"Why, Jurgen," says the black gentleman, in high astonishment, "do you mean to tell me that you want the plague of your life back again?"

"I do not know about that, either, sir. She was certainly very hard to live with. On the other hand, I had become used to having her about. I rather miss her."

Now the black gentleman meditated.

"Come, friend," he says, at last, "you are a poet of some merit. You display a promising talent which might be cleverly developed, in any suitable environment. The trouble is"—and he lowered his voice to a whisper that was truly diabolical—"the trouble is that your wife does not understand you. She is hindering your art. Yes, that precisely sums it up: she is interfering with your soul-development, and your instinctive need of self-expression, and all that sort of thing. You are very well rid of her. To the other side, as is with point observed somewhere or other, it is not good for man to live alone. But, friend, I have just the wife for you—"

Then Koschei waved his hand; and there, quick as winking, was the loveliest lady that Jurgen had ever imagined. Fair was she to look upon, with her shining grey eyes and small, smiling lips, a fairer woman might no man boast of having seen. And she regarded Jurgen graciously, with her cheeks red and white, very lovely to observe. She was clothed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and about her neck was a collar of red gold. When she spoke her voice was music. And she told him that she was Queen Guenevere.

"But Launcelot is turned monk, at Glastonbury; and Arthur is gone into Avalon," says she: "and I will be your wife if you will have me, Messire Jurgen."

The poet was troubled.

"For you make me think myself a god," says Jurgen. "Madame Guenevere, when man recognized himself to be Heaven's vicar upon earth, it was to serve and to glorify and to protect you and your radiant sisterhood that man consecrated his existence. You were beautiful, and you were frail; you were half goddess and half bric-à-brac. Ohimé, I recognize the call of chivalry, and my heartstrings resound: yet, for innumerable reasons, I hesitate to take you for my wife, and to concede myself your appointed protector, responsible as such to Heaven. For one matter, I am not altogether sure that I am Heaven's vicar here upon earth. I cannot but suspect that Omniscience would have selected some more competent representative."

"It is so written, Messire Jurgen."

Jurgen shrugged. "I, too, have written much that is beautiful. Very often my verses were so beautiful that I would have given anything in the world in exchange for somewhat less sure information as to the author's veracity. Ah, no, madame, desire and knowlege are pressing me so sorely that, betwen them, I dare not love you, and still I cannot help it."

Then Jurgen gave a little wringing gesture with his hands. His smile was not merry.

"Madame and queen," says he, "there was once a man who worshipped all women. To him they were one and all of sacred, sweet, intimidating beauty. He shaped sonorous rhymes of this, in praise of the mystery and sanctity of women. Then several ladies made much of him, because, good lack, 'he understood women.' That was very unfortunate: for more reasons than one, all poets should be kept away from petticoats. So a little by a little he be-

gan to suspect that women, also, are akin to their parents; and are no wiser, and no more subtle, and no more immaculate, than the father who begot them. Madame and queen, it is not good for any man to suspect this."

"It is certainly not the conduct of a chivalrous person, nor of an authentic poet," says Queen Guenevere. "And yet your eyes are big with tears."

"Hah, madame," he replied, "but it amuses me to weep for a dead man with eyes that once were his."

Now said Queen Guenevere:

"Farewell to you, then, Jurgen, for it is I that am leaving you forever. I was the lovely and excellent masterwork of God: in Caerleon and Northgalis and at Joyeuse Garde might men behold me with delight, because to view me was to comprehend the power and kindliness of their Creator. Very beautiful was Iseult, and the face of Luned sparkled like a moving gem; Morgaine and Viviane and shrewd Nimuë were lovely, too; and the comeliness of Ettarre exalted the beholder like proud music: these, going about Arthur's hall, seemed Heaven's finest craftsmanship until the Queen came to her dais, as the moon among glowing stars: men then affirmed that God in making Guenevere had used both hands. My beauty was no human white and red, said they, but a proud sign of Heaven's might. In approaching me, men thought of God, because in me, they said, His splendour was incarnate. That which I willed was neither right nor wrong: it was divine. This thing it was that the knights saw in me; this surety, as to the power and generosity of their great Father, it was of which the chevaliers of yesterday were conscious in beholding me, and of men's need to be worthy of such parentage: and it is I that am leaving you for ever."

Said Jurgen:

"It is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me. I am become as a rudderless boat that goes from wave to wave: I am turned to unfertile dust that a whirlwind makes coherent and presently lets fall. And so farewell to you, Queen Guenevere, for it is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me."

Thus he cried farewell to the daughter of Gogyran. And instantly she vanished like the flame of a blown-out altar-candle. . . .

II

THEN came to Jurgen that Queen Anaïtis who very long ago was the bright bane of nations. Words may not describe her loveliness. And she talked of marvellous things. Of the lore of Thaïs she spoke, and of the schooling of Sappho, and of the secrets of Rhodopê, and of the mourning for Adonis.

"For we have but a little while to live, and thereafter none knows his fate. A man possesses nothing certain save a brief loan of his own body: and yet the body of a man is capable of much curious pleasure. As thus and thus," says she.

And the bright-coloured woman spoke with antique directness of matters that Jurgen found rather embarrassing.

"Come, come!" thinks he, "but it will never do to seem provincial. I believe that I am actually blushing."

Aloud he said:

"Sweetheart, there was once a youth who sought quite zealously for the overmastering frenzies you prattle about. But, candidly, he could not find the flesh whose touch would rouse insanity. The lad had opportunities, too, let me tell you! Hah, I recall with tenderness the glitter of eyes and hair, and the gay garments, and the soft voices of those fond, foolish women, even now! But he went from one pair of lips to another, with an ardour that was always half-feigned, and with protestations that were conscious echoes of some romance or other. Such escapades were pleasant enough; but they were not very serious, after all. For these things concerned his body alone: and I am more than an edifice of viands reared by my teeth. To pretend that what my body does or endures is of importance, seems rather silly now-

adays. I prefer to regard it as a necessary beast of burden which I maintain, at considerable expense and trouble. So I shall make no more pother over it."

But then again Queen Anaïtis spoke of marvellous things; and he listened, fair-mindedly, for the queen spoke of that which was hers to share with him.

"In Babylon I have a temple where many women sit with cords about them and burn bran for perfume, while they await that thing which is to befall them. In Armenia I have a temple surrounded by vast gardens, where only strangers have the right to enter: they there receive a hospitality that is more than gallant. In Paphos I have a temple wherein is a little pyramid of white stones, very curious to see: but still more curious is the statue in my temple at Amathus, of a bearded woman, which displays other features that women do not possess. And in Alexandria I have a temple that is tended by thirty-six exceedingly wise and sacred persons, and wherein it is always night: and there men seek for monstrous pleasures, even at the price of instant death, and win to both of these swiftly. Everywhere my temples stand upon high places near the sea: so they are beheld from afar by those whom I hold dearest, my beautiful broad-chested, hairy mariners, who do not fear even me, but know that in my temples they will find notable employment. For I must tell you of what is to be encountered within these places that are mine, and of how pleasantly we pass our time there."

So she told him. . . .

Now he listened more attentively than before, and his eyes were narrowed, and his lips were lax and motionless and foolish-looking.

To Jurgen this queen's voice was all a horrible and strange and lovely magic.

Then Jurgen growled and shook himself, half-angrily; and he tweaked the ear of Queen Anaïtis.

"Sweetheart," says he, "you paint a glowing picture; but you are shrewd enough to borrow your pigments from the daydreams of inexperience. What you prattle about is not at all as you describe it. Also, you forget you are talking to a married man of some years' standing. Moreover, I shudder to think of what might happen if Lisa were to walk in unexpectedly. And for the rest, you come a deal too late, my lass, so that all this to-do over nameless sins and unspeakable caresses and other anonymous antics seems rather naïve. My ears are beset by eloquent grey hairs which plead at closer quarters than does that fibbing little tongue of yours. And so be off with you."

With that Queen Anaïtis smiled very cruelly and said:

"Farewell to you, then, Jurgen, for it is I that am leaving you forever. Henceforward you must fret away much sunlight by interminably shunning discomfort and by indulging tepid preferences. For I, and none but I, can waken that desire which uses all of a man, and so wastes nothing, even though it leave that favoured man forever after like wan ashes in the sunlight. And with you I have no more to do. Join with your greying fellows, then! and help them to affront the clean, sane sunlight by making guilds and laws and solemn phrases wherewith to rid the world of me! I, Anaïtis, laugh, and my heart is a wave in the sunlight. For there is no power like my power, and no living thing which can withstand my power: and those who deride me, as I well know, are but the emptied dead, dry husks that a wind moves, with hissing noises, while I harvest in open sunlight. For I am the desire that uses all of a man; and it is I that am leaving you forever."

Said Jurgen:

"Again it is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me. I am become as a puzzled ghost that furtively observes the doings of loud-voiced, ruddy persons; and I am compact of weariness and apprehension, for I no longer discern what thing is I, nor what is my desire, and I fear that I am already dead. So farewell to you, Queen

Anaïtis, for this, too, is a sorrowful thing that is happening to me."

Thus he cried farewell to the Sun's daughter. And all the colours of her loveliness flickered and merged into the likeness of a tall, thin flame, that aspired; and then this flame was extinguished. . . .

III

Now silently came Queen Helen. She said nothing at all, because there was no need. But, beholding her, Jurgen kneeled. He hid his face in her white robe, and stayed thus, without speaking, for a long while.

"Lady of my vision," he said, and his voice broke, "assuredly I believe that your father was that ardent bird which nestled very long ago in Leda's bosom. And now Troy's sons are all in Hades' keeping, in the world below; fire has consumed the walls of Troy, and the years have forgotten her proud conquerors: but still you are bringing woe on woe on hapless sufferers." And again his voice broke. For the world seemed cheerless, and like a house that none has lived in for many years.

Then, with queer pride, he raised his time-lined countenance, much as a man condemned might turn to the executioner.

"Lady, if you indeed be the Swan's daughter, very long ago there was a child that was ill. And his illness turned to a fever, and in his fever he arose from his bed one night, saying that he must set out for Troy, because of his love for Queen Helen. I was once that child. I remember how strange it seemed to me that I should be talking such nonsense; I remember how the warm room smelt of drugs; and I remember how I pitied the trouble in my nurse's face, drawn and old in the yellow lamplight. For she loved me, and she did not understand; and she pleaded with me to be a good boy and not to worry my sleeping parents. But I perceive now that I was not talking nonsense. Yours is the beauty which all poets know to exist, somewhere, and which life, as men have contrived it thus far, does not anywhere afford. For that beauty I have hungered always. Toward that beauty I have struggled always, but not quite whole-heartedly. That night forecast my life. I have hungered for you; and"—he laughed here—"and I have always stayed a passably good boy, lest I should beyond reason disturb my family."

And Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men, said nothing at all, because there was no need. For the man who has once glimpsed her loveliness is beyond saving, and beyond the desire of being saved.

"To-night," says Jurgen, "through the shrewd art of Koschei, it appears that you stand within arm's reach. Hah, lady, were that possible—and I know very well it is not possible, whatever my senses may report—I am not fit to mate with your perfection. At the bottom of my heart I no longer desire perfection. For we that are taxpayers as well as immortal souls must live by politic evasions and formulæ and catchwords that fret away our lives as moths waste a garment: we fall insensibly to common sense as to a drug; and it dulls and kills that which in us is fine and rebellious and unreasonable: so that you will find no man of my years with whom living is not a mechanism that gnaws away time unprompted. I am become the creature of use and wont; I am the lackey of prudence and half-measures; and I have put my dreams upon an allowance. Yet even now I love you more than I love costly foods and indolence and flattery. What more can an old poet say? For that reason, lady, I pray you begone, because your loveliness is a taunt that I find unendurable."

But his voice yearned, because this was Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men, who regarded him with grave, kind eyes. She seemed to view, as one appraises the pattern of an unrolled carpet, every action of Jurgen's life: and she seemed, too, to wonder, without reproach or trouble, how men could

be so foolish and of their own accord become so miry.

"Oh, I have failed my vision!" cries Jurgen. "I have failed, and I know very well that every man must fail; and yet my shame is no less bitter. For I am transmuted by time's handling! I shudder at the thought of living day in and day out with my vision! And so I will have none of you for my wife."

Then, trembling, Jurgen raised toward his lips the hand of her who was the world's darling.

"And so farewell to you, Queen Helen! Oh, very often in a woman's face I have found this or that feature wherein she resembled you, and for the sake of it have served that woman blindly. And all my verses, as I know now, were vain enchantments striving to evoke that hidden loveliness of which I knew by dim report alone until tonight. Oh, all my life was a foiled quest of you, Queen Helen, who came too late. Yes, certainly, it should be graved upon my tomb, *Queen Helen ruled this earth while it stayed worthy.* . . But that was very long ago. Today I ride no more a-questing anything: instead, I potter after hearthside comforts, and play the physician with myself, and strive painstakingly to make old bones. And no man's notion anywhere seems worth a cup of mulled wine; and for the sake of no notion would I endanger the routine which so hideously bores me. For I am transmuted by time's handling; I have become the lackey of prudence and half-measures: and so, farewell to you, Queen Helen, for I have failed in the service of my vision, and I deny you utterly!"

Thus he cried farewell to the Swan's daughter: and Queen Helen vanished as a bright mist passes, not departing swiftly as had done the other two; and Jurgen was alone with the black gentleman. . . .

IV

"Come, come!" observed Koshchei the Deathless, "but you are certainly hard to please."

Well, Jurgen was already intent to shrug off his displayal of emotion.

"In selecting a wife, sir," submitted Jurgen, "there are all sorts of matters to be considered. Whatever the first impulse of the moment, it was apparent to any reflective person that in the past of each of these ladies there was much to suggest inborn inaptitude for domestic life. And I am a peace-loving fellow, sir; nor do I hold with moral laxity, except, of course, in talk, when it promotes sociability, and in verse-making, wherein it is esteemed as a conventional ornament. Still, Prince, the chance I lost! I do not refer to matrimony, you conceive. But in the presence of these famous fair ones with what glowing words I ought to have spoken! upon a wondrous ladder of strophes, metaphors and recondite allusions, to what stylistic heights of Asiatic prose I ought to have ascended! And instead, I twaddled like a schoolmaster. Decidedly, Lisa is right, and I am good-for-nothing. However," he added hopefully, "it appeared to me that this evening Lisa was somewhat less outspoken than usual."

"Eh, sirs, but she was under a very potent spell. I found that necessary, in the interest of law and order hereabouts. We are not accustomed to the excesses of practical persons who are ruthlessly bent upon reforming their associates. Indeed, it is one of the advantages of my situation that such folk rarely come my way." And the black gentleman in turn shrugged. "You will pardon me, but I am positively committed to help out an archbishop with some of his churchwork this evening, and there is a rather important assassination to be instigated at Vienna. So time presses. Meanwhile, you have inspected the flower of womanhood; and I cannot soberly believe that you prefer your termagant of a wife."

"Frankly, Prince, I also am, as usual, undecided. Could you let me see her, for just a moment?"

This was no sooner asked than done: for there, sure enough, was Dame Lisa. She was no longer restricted to quiet

speech by any stupendous necromancy, and seemed peevish: and uncommonly plain she looked after the passing of those lovely ladies.

"Well, you rascal!" begins dame Lisa, addressing Jurgen, "and so you thought to be rid of me! Oh, a precious lot you are! and a deal of thanks I get for my scrimping and slaving!" And she began scolding away. She said he was even worse than the Countess Varvara.

But rather unaccountably Jurgen fell to thinking of the years they had shared together; of the fine and merry girl that Lisa had been before she married him; and of how well she knew his tastes in cookery and all his other little preferences; and of how cleverly she humoured them on those rare days when nothing had occurred to vex her: and of how much more unpleasant—everything considered—life was without her than with her. And his big, foolish heart was half yearning and half penitence.

"I think I will take her back, Prince," says he, very quietly. "For I do not know but that it is as hard on her as on me."

"My friend, do you forget the poet that you might be, even yet? No rational person would dispute that the society and amiable chat of Dame Lisa is a desideratum—"

But Dame Lisa was always resentful of long words. "Be silent, you black scoffer! and do not allude to such disgraceful things in the presence of respectable people! For I am a decent Christian woman, I would have you understand. But everybody knows your reputation! and a very fit companion you are for that scamp yonder. Jurgen, I always told you you would come to this, and now I hope you are satisfied. Jurgen, do not stand there with your mouth open, like a scared fish, when I ask you a civil question! but answer when you are spoken to! and do not say a single word to me, Jurgen, because I am disgusted with you. For, Jurgen, you heard perfectly well what your very suitable friend just said about me. No, do not ask me what he said, Jurgen! I leave that to your conscience. So, if my own husband has not the feelings of a man, and cannot protect me from insults and low company, I had best be going home and getting supper ready. I daresay the house is like a pigsty. And to think of your going about in public, even among such associates, with a button off your shirt! You are enough to drive a person mad: and I warn you that I am done with you forever."

And Dame Lisa walked with dignity toward the mouth of the cave. "So you can come with me, or not, precisely as you elect. It is all one to me, I can assure you, after the cruel things you have said. But I shall stop by for a word with that high-and-mighty Varvara on the way home. You two need never think to hoodwink me about your goings-on."

And with that Dame Lisa went away, still talking.

V

"PHEW!" said Koshchei, in the ensuing silence; "you had better stay overnight, in any event. I really think, friend, you will be more comfortable, just now at least, with me."

But Jurgen had taken up his caftan.

"No, I daresay I had better be going too," says Jurgen. "I thank you very heartily for your intended kindness, sir, still I do not know but it is better as it is. And is there anything"—he coughed delicately—"and is there anything to pay, sir?"

"Well, not, of course, for the freedom of Dame Lisa. We very rarely molest the wives of poets. It is not considered sportsmanlike. But I must tell you it is not permitted any person to leave my presence unmaimed. One must have rules, you know."

"You would chop off an arm? or a hand? or a whole finger? Come now, Prince, you must be joking!"

Koshchei the Deathless was very grave as he sat there, in meditation, drumming with his long fingers upon

the table-top that was curiously inlaid with thirty pieces of silver. In the lamplight his sharp nails glittered like flame-points. "Eh, sir, the toll which I exact you have already paid, though not to me. You have retained nothing that I esteem worth taking. So you, friend, may depart unhindered whenever you will."

Jurgen meditated this clemency, and with a sick heart he understood. "Yes, that is true. For I have not retained the faith nor the desire nor the vision. Yes, that is very true, worse luck. . . . Meanwhile I can assure you I admired each of the ladies very unfeignedly, and was greatly flattered by their kind offers. More than generous, I thought them. But it really would not do for me to take up with any one of them now. For Lisa is my wife, you see. A great deal has passed between us—and I have been a great disappointment to her, in many ways—and I am used to her—" Then Jurgen considered, and regarded the black gentleman with mingled envy and commiseration. "Why, no, you probably would not understand, sir, because I suppose there is no marrying or giving in marriage here, either. But I can assure you it is always pretty much like that."

"I lack grounds to dispute your aphorism," observed Koshchei, "inasmuch as matrimony was not included in my doom. None the less, to a bystander, the conduct of both of you appears remarkable."

"The truth of it, sir, is a great symbol," said Jurgen, with a splurge of confidence, "in that my wife is rather foolishly fond of me. Oh, I grant you, it is the fashion of women to discard civility towards those for whom they suffer most willingly: and whom a woman loveth she chasteneth, after a good precedent. . . . For, Prince, they are all poets; but the medium they work in is not always ink. So the moment that Lisa is set free from what, in a manner of speaking, sir, inconsiderate persons might, in their unthinking way, refer to as the terrors of a place that I do not for an instant doubt to be conducted after a system which furthers the true interests of everybody, and so reflects vast credit upon its officials, if you will pardon my frankness, sir"—and Jurgen smiled ingratiatingly—"why, at that moment Lisa's thoughts take form in very much the high denunciatory vein of Jeremiah and Amos, who were remarkably fine poets: and her next essay in creative composition is my supper. To-morrow she will darn and sew me an epic. Such, sir, are Lisa's poems, all addressed to me, who came so near to gallivanting with mere queens! Oh, Prince, when I consider steadfastly the depth and the intensity of that devotion which, for so many years, has tended me, and has endured the society of that person whom I peculiarly know to be the most tedious and irritating of companions, I stand aghast, before a miracle. And I cry, *Oh, certainly a goddess!* Hah, all we poets write a deal about love: but none of us may grasp the word's full meaning until he reflects that this is a passion mighty enough to induce a woman to put up with him. And the crowning touch is that Lisa is jealous. Think upon that, now!" And Jurgen chuckled. "Yet still you probably would not understand, sir, because I suppose there is no marrying or giving in marriage, here either. No less, the truth of it is a great symbol."

Then Jurgen sighed, and shook hands with Koshchei, very circumspectly, and went home to his wife. And he found her quite unaltered. Thus it was in the old days.

THIS PAST WINTER

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

THE disappointments of this past winter—Ah, me! Pauline has married, and no longer telephones me after midnight. . . . Annabelle eloped with an utter stranger, and I have no one now to accompany me to Long Beach. . . . Ethel returned all my letters and sent her brother around to see me because I did not return hers with sufficient quickness. . . . Bernice won her suit for breach of promise and is spending the summer in Atlantic City. . . . Emily demanded an increase in her alimony, and a sympathetic judge doubled her allowance. . . . Hortense neglected to return the engagement ring I gave her, and has since added to her collection. . . . Fanny threatened me until I gave her husband a position, and I can't fire him. . . . And Lucille . . . Lucille married me!

The disappointments of this past winter—Ah, me!

SEPULTURE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

I HAVE taken my thought of you
And hallowed it in far
Cool crypts of memory where the dead
Of all light lovers are.

I have buried my thought of you—
Your lips, your hands, your hair;
Each dear, inconsequent grace, each word
That made my heart aware.

I have hidden my thought of you . . .
But what if I should see
A ghost return to haunt your eyes—
What of your thought of me!

HANDSOME MEN

NOTHING so improves personal appearance as that slight smooth tan which comes with exposure to the sun and air.

"SUNBRONZE DE LUXE"

gives a perfect simulation of this tint, is **undetectable, perfectly harmless, and absolutely genuine,** to which its 5,000 testimonials received from every quarter of the globe is sufficient evidence. Unique in method and perfection of result, SUNBRONZE DE LUXE has stood the **TEST OF TIME.** Forwarded free from observation, price **10/6** (*Mark II de Luxe for Ladies,* **3 guineas**), direct from **Sunbronze Laboratories, 157, Church St., Stoke Newington, London.** (*Established* 1902.)

This Dainty Cream brings added Charm to any Face

Pomeroy Day Cream is, of all "vanishing" creams, the most delightful. It has a lovely effect on the skin, and is so fragrant and refreshing that one wants to be using it always. Being non-greasy and vanishing, it can be used any time, any day. The more you use it, the better for the skin, which is rendered soft, smooth, and fresh, and is protected against wind and weather.

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Face Treatments and the Successful Treatment for Superfluous Hair, at above address and branches.

How Army Officer's Widow Killed All Her Superfluous Hair for Ever.

By Special Arrangement, She Offers Free Full Instructions how She Eradicated Hideous Growths on Face and Arms after 20 years' Failures with Electricity, Liquids, Powders, and Paste.

Remarkable Secret of the Hindoo Religion, now exposed Freely for the First Time, Enables any Lady to be rid of Superfluous Hair for Ever.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Frederica Hudson, widow of a Surgeon in the Indian Army, any lady can now secure quick, complete, and permanent relief from the curse of Superfluous Hair.

Here is Mrs. Hudson's story:—"For years I was sorely afflicted with a heavy moustache, several tufts of beard and a hideous hairy covering on my arms. Like many others, I wasted a small fortune on the various preparations advertised, all of which made my growth all the worse. I also submitted to the terrible electric needle, but found that for every hair thus destroyed at least two came back in its place. My husband, who was Major in the British Army in India, discovered (as anyone can learn by consulting the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' and other standard works) that Hindoo women are forbidden by their religion to have hair on any part of the body except their head. Even the faintest trace of hair on the lip, chin, or arms would for ever ostracise a Hindoo woman. The Hindoo method of destroying hair, however, has always been a closely guarded religious secret; but just before his own death, my husband saved the life of a converted Native Soldier, and persuaded him to reveal the secret of the Hindoo Hair-Destroyer. My husband gave me the entire formula. I tried it. The very first application made the hair weak and withery-looking.

In a few days the hair entirely disappeared, and since then I have never had a trace of hair to show. And so, having found that this remarkable remedy absolutely killed my heavy moustache, the coarse tufts of hair on my face, and the heavy covering on my arms, from which I suffered 20 years' humiliation, I want every woman to have the benefit of the secret which my husband secured for me.

"So write me to-day, sending me the Coupon below, or a copy of it, with your name and address (please state whether Mrs. or Miss), together with two penny stamps for postage, and I will send you free full and complete instructions so that you need never have any trace of superfluous hair to annoy you again for the rest of your life. I will also send you free particulars of other valuable beauty secrets as soon as they are ready. Address as below."

THIS FREE COUPON or copy of same to be sent with your name and address and 2d. stamps.

Mrs. HUDSON: Please send me free full information and instructions to cure superfluous hair; also details of other beauty secrets as soon as you can. Address: FREDERICA HUDSON, Dept. N 747, No. 9, Old Cavendish Street, London, W. 1.

IMPORTANT NOTE.—Mrs. Hudson belongs to a family high in Society, and is the widow of a prominent Army Officer, so you can write her with entire confidence. Address as above.

WHEN ANSWERING THESE ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THE SMART SET

ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

Tub frocks, shady hats, and a really good and cool black frock will probably head the list of articles most in demand by women at this time of the year. The summer has come with a sudden rush, and has found a great many of us unprepared, the reason being that everyone is busy doing war-work of some sort or another, and clothes have been taking quite a secondary place in the general scheme of things. But the sun has brought his presence home to us so forcibly that something cool is an absolute necessity, and the shops find it difficult to compete with the great demand on their very curtailed resources. Cotton georgette—or Bryk-Bryk as it is sometimes called—is enjoying a very well-deserved popularity, and is to be had in such pretty shades, that many of the very daintiest and most useful little frocks are composed of it; also it has the supreme charm of being inexpensive. Cotton voile, too, is very much beloved by the summer girl. It can be had in such a variety of designs, and washes so well, that it will be many a long day before it becomes one of those pleasant memories of the past. Linen, alas, will soon be in this category. It is getting more and more scarce, and the price more and more prohibitive—but, "où sont les neiges d'antan"—and if we have lost many good things with the snows of yesterday, we have gained many more with the summer of to-day. The big Paris dressmakers have risen to the occasion in the most wonderful way, and frocks are prettier and daintier than ever. What could be more attractive than a little verdigris coloured frock in crêpe georgette, with both sides arrayed in corrugated pleats from below the arms to the hem, loosely caught in with floating sash ends, and the neck fairly décolleté for the sake of coolness, and crowning all, a large shady hat of tulle with a wreath of squashed bright-coloured flowers. There is nothing very new in the outline, but it is the only really popular one at the present. Its elusiveness is certainly most becoming and it tends to conceal an imperfection, and yet reveal the line of grace and beauty with an indescribable subtlety that is altogether artistic. The waist is usually very slightly indicated, and skirts have a tendency to fall inwards toward the feet.

A cool black frock is almost a necessity to those who are condemned to pass most of the summer in town. Anything else gets grubby and tired-looking so quickly, and this year we can combine many materials, so that a splendid effect may often be arrived at without too great an outlay, particularly if we have odd lengths of silk that have been bought before the really good materials vanished from the market. *Now* is the opportunity for using these short lengths that were just not long enough before. One of the prettiest black frocks seen lately had a skirt of crêpe-de-chine, and a jumper of georgette daintily embroidered in silver thread, while over this were wide shoulder straps of charmeuse held in loosely at the waist by a narrow silver ribbon, and continuing to the hem of the skirt, both back and front, in the form of wide floating panels.

Black net and taffetas mixed is quite one of the features of the day. Taffetas is a little hard by itself, but the softening effect of the net works wonders. The little frock I have in my mind at present had floating panels of kilted net over the taffetas skirt, which started well above the waistline, and was lightly held in by a swathed sash of net. The top was entirely of a transparent net, with a small gilet of white lace, and a filmy floating collar of picot-edged net at the back. With this was worn a large shady black hat boasting

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REGINA
SHAVING STICK

keeps moist on the face till the end of the shave.
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THE SOAP WITHOUT A SMART IN IT.
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A CLIENT WRITES: "Dear Madam,—I am so pleased to tell you the 'Dara' treatment was quite a success, therefore there is no need to make any appointment with you. I must confess I had no faith in the 'Dara' when sending for it, which makes my gratitude to you all the more real. I must thank you very much for your wonderful remedy, and remain, Yours gratefully, ——."

(*Original of above, also other Testimonials, can be seen.*)

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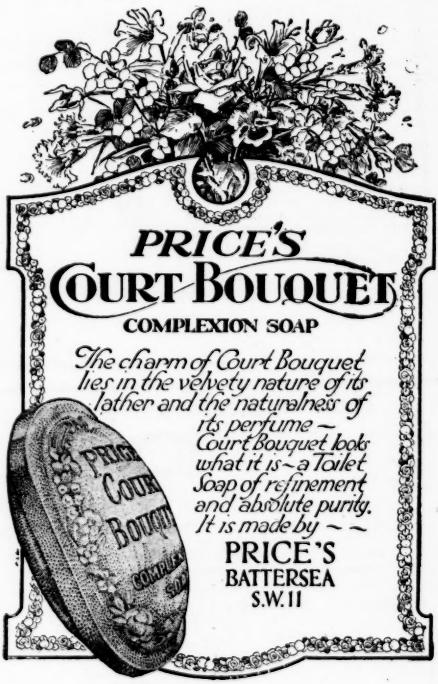
a draped veil of black and silver fishnet, held in place by a moiré ribbon. One of the big Paris houses is making a great feature of dyed filet lace. At first this sounds almost like sacrilege, but when once it is seen in a lovely shade of grey inlet between crêpe-de-chine of the same tone, all prejudices melt away, and one has to confess that the effect is really very alluring. The chemise frock in question had side panels of alternate rows of the crêpe-de-chine and dyed lace, while its front and back widths were of the finest and tiniest pleats imaginable, and nattier blue figured ribbon was cunningly draped across the front, giving just the requisite note of colour. The feeling this year is to have trimming going round the figure, but this is a dangerous practice, except for the tall and slender, as it is very inclined to take away much coveted inches. However, the really clever designers are compromising by cutting up the circular effect by means of loose panels of an overdress, thus conceding to Dame Fashion, and the wearer alike. Foulard is with us once more! Indeed I cannot remember a summer when it has not been in evidence in some guise or other. It is so eminently practical, does not crush, is very cool, and can be worn by young and old alike. Imagine a plain navy foulard cut on jumper lines, with the side panels rather full, and cut slightly higher than the front and back. Two wide sashes of brilliant green charmeuse are threaded in and out through the loose jumper bodice, starting at opposite sides and crossing front and back, the two ends meeting below each hip, and there knotted with long floating ends. The collar is of white lawn, and is of the sailor persuasion, and cut rather low in front to show a tiny vest of the foulard, ornamented with rather a natty little green ribbon bow, and with this a coarse straw Breton sailor hat in navy blue.

Light coloured shoes and stockings are all the rage—particularly grey. In fact, pale grey, and the light neutral shades in general are enjoying more popularity than ever. Perhaps people are getting just a little tired of the very sombre shades that have marked the general mood for so long.

A NEW TONIC

Newman's Fortreviver Liqueur Tonic, recently placed on the market, has been so favourably received by the public that the proprietors have been unable to keep pace with the demand. Arrangements have now been made by which this difficulty will shortly be removed. "Fortreviver," which is non-alcoholic, has been analyzed by the editors of various medical journals, who pronounce it to be a food composed of the finest concentrated fruit juices, and, therefore, in these days of shortage, a very great asset to the nation. We may add that the preparation is entirely British made.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